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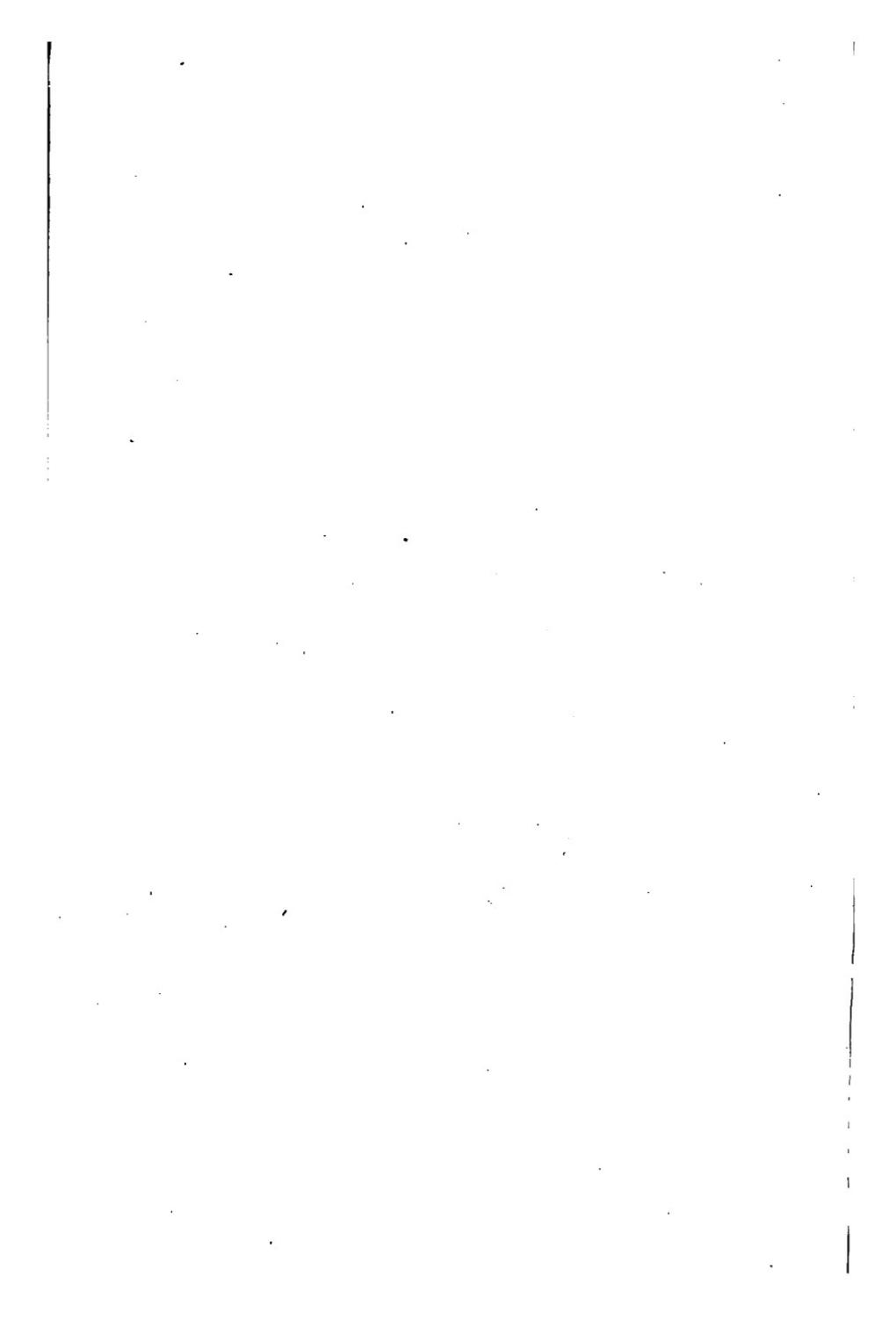
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JAMES GORDON'S WIFE.

"We are at school: through this strange life of ours,
 We pass, like children through their teaching-time;
Training in lowly trust our highest powers,
 Learning by common things truths most sublime."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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JAMES GORDON'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

It is not because your heart is mine—mine only—
Mine alone ;
It is not because you chose me, weak and lonely,
For your own ;
Not because the earth is fairer, and the skies
Spread above you
Are more radiant for the shining of your eyes—
That I love you !

But because this human love, though true and sweet—
Yours and mine—
Has been sent by Love more tender, more complete,
More divine ;
That it leads our hearts to rest at last in Heaven,
Far above you ;
Do I take you as a gift that God has given—
—And I love you !

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

“ **H**ERE we are, at last !” said Olivia, as
the carriage came within sight of
the door : “ I wonder how Gabrielle has

been getting on ! I hope she has not felt lonely."

"To tell you the truth, I suspect that she has felt exceedingly the reverse," replied Cissy.

"What do you mean ? James can never leave Rotherbridge till quite late."

"Oh no, never. Who mentioned James?" said Cissy, innocently.

She sprang from the carriage, as she spoke, and ran to Olivia's room. There, all alone, James sat : lost in a dream.

"Hum :" said Cissy.

He started, rising hastily to his feet.

"My dear Gabrielle !" cried Cissy : " You are wondrously transformed ! and, to my taste, not for the better. Is Comus here still ? Because, if so, I trust he'll make a different sort of animal of me !"

"Where is Olivia ?"

"Voice and all ! The metamorphose is

really perfect. What will James say, though? He 'can never leave Rotherbridge till quite late ;' but he's certain to appear before bedtime. It will be Dromio over again ; and I only hope that he may survive the fright."

"Cissy, you are a downright——"

"Fool, dear ?" said Cissy, in an insinuating tone : "That little touch of Billingsgate enlightens me ! Comus is innocent, after all : and this creature is James himself."

"Cissy, let me pass, if you please: I want Olivia."

"No doubt you do, dearest brother : and patience likewise. What has become of Gabrielle ? I hope you have not been mending the fire with her ? it would be very false economy. But I left her here alone : and now, returning, I find you here alone. Exceedingly suspicious."

"Gabrielle is upstairs, I believe," said James: "Now, Cissy, please——"

He laid his hand on her shoulder, and gently assisted her to move out of his way. The next moment, he was in the hall, with the astonished Olivia.

"James! What has brought you home? You are not ill?"

"Ill! Nonsense. Come here, Olivia—to my study. I want to speak to you."

"But, James, it is time to dress. Can't you wait until after dinner?"

"No, I can't," replied James, impatiently. He drew her into the study: and closed the door.

"Well, Olivia!" he said, planting himself with his back against the wall: "Well, Olivia! it is done. Gabrielle and I are engaged."

Olivia laid down her card-case, and sunk into a chair.

"You are engaged." Her lips rather formed, than spoke, the words. She had long expected these tidings; yet they came with the force of a blow. Her boy—her idol—was no more her own peculiar property. The days when she could so regard him, the days when she had secretly gloried in the thought that she was first to him, as he to her: were passed away for ever.

But where she had lost, Gabrielle had gained. And Gabrielle loved him as well as—perhaps better than—she. She struggled one moment: and was content.

"I am so glad, dearest boy"—she said, standing on tip-toe to kiss him—"I am so glad to hear this good news. I hope, I believe, that you will be happy. She is a very dear child."

This was a subject upon which James could not talk—to Olivia, at any rate. He returned her kiss; then stood silent: still leaning against the wall.

"There will be a great deal to settle," said Olivia, sinking again into the chair, and pressing her hand to her forehead: "It is growing late now; but on Monday, we must have a long consultation. I suppose, on account of Gabrielle's chest, you will wish to be—married"—with a gulp—"very soon?"

James observed the gulp; and his conscience smote him. He felt that he had been selfish.

"Olivia, I hope you don't fancy that this will interfere, in any way, with my affection for you? Because, if so, you are mistaken."

"Oh, no!" said Olivia, smiling: although the smile was rather sad: "I fancy nothing. Don't trouble yourself, or let Gabrielle trouble herself, about that. I can't be your wife, but I can still be your sister: and Gabrielle's also,—which will make me very happy."

"And you must go on living here, just the same," said James.

Olivia shook her head.

"No, dear James; it would be against my principles. A young couple is better alone. Of course I shall be sorry to leave Farnley; but—as Mr. Morris says—there are many alleviations. Cissy's company, in itself, is sufficient to make any house bright; and then Annie will be so glad to have us near her."

"Near her! You think of going to Enderby?"

"Yes. It has long been a castle of Annie's. There is a house—a very pretty one—just within the park gates—"

"What! That brown affair, be-porched and be-honeysuckled?"

"Exactly. She has often threatened to establish me there, some day, with a cat and a tea-kettle, and so on. But all this is pre-

mature, James," said Olivia, rising: "We will postpone discussions until Monday. And now I must see Gabrielle. Where shall I find her? In my room?"

"In her own, I fancy. She left me some time ago. She was afraid of Cissy's coming back, and finding us together. I wish——"

"What do you wish?" asked Olivia, tenderly: perceiving by his tone, that something, some tiny desideratum, was still missing from his cup of happiness.

"I wish——" said James, answering mechanically—"that she were a little less---reticent---timid—I hardly know what to call it. I wish that I could feel quite certain of her loving me as——" He remembered to whom he was speaking: and drew himself up.

"My dear James! we must not expect much demonstration of that kind, at first. In time, no doubt, she will gain confidence.

You must wait. Meanwhile, I am convinced, her real feelings towards you are all that can be desired."

"You ought to go and dress, Olivia," said James, stiffly, looking at his watch.

Olivia, the channel of her thoughts at once diverted, took up her card-case : exclaimed, "Indeed I ought!"—and left the study.

The next day, Sunday, was warm and genial, more like May than the end of October. Nevertheless Gabrielle felt weaker than she had felt for a long time. The various excitements of the past week had exhausted her ; and now her joy, in its first intensity, seemed almost more than she could bear. The walk to church was short, but it tired her sadly ; she was glad to get into her corner of the large square pew, to lean back and to rest. James leant back in his own, and looked at her ; and a truer

feeling of devotion stole over him, than he had ever known before.

As she sat there, so fragile, so pale, so pure, she seemed to him something akin to the angels ; he began to doubt whether the reverence which she inspired in his heart, were not a deeper, holier reverence than that which led him to bow before the heroes of intellect,—before intellect, in the abstract, itself. This was at any rate, the most celestial kind. Gazing on her, his proud dreams melted, sank into oblivion ; his thoughts went back to a time when those dreams did not exist : when he, a little child, listened in innocent faith to the old Bible stories, making simple remarks concerning them, asking simple questions, wishing simple wishes about Heaven, and the Heavenly people, and being “ good.” The spirit that shone out in Gabrielle’s face, seemed, in some mysterious way, the same which in

those childish days, in those Bible stories, had appeared so beautiful, so glorious ; of which all fair things, all things to be venerated,—stars, sunsets, churches, sweet music,—had then been full.

Long had this bright halo of infancy faded ; but now it—or its shadow—revived. He thought of a line which he had once heard in a song, and had condemned as extravagant : it ran—

“Taught to adore by earth’s deep love.”

Now he recalled his verdict. No ; it was not extravagant ; his own experience proved that it might be true.

The service began ; Gabrielle’s lassitude increased. The continual changes of posture were strangely trying. Soon everything became dim and indistinct. Mr. Edgecumbe’s voice sounded like a voice in a dream. She said the responses mechanically : feeling, all the time, as though some

one else were saying them, and she listening. She was conscious that James leant forward, and asked if she felt faint—to which, also mechanically, she answered No: but afterwards, as the Creed ended, he leant forward again, and told her not to kneel; and, mechanically still, she obeyed—sitting instead. Then, there was only one person—James—beside herself, in the church. Or no—she was not in the church: she was somewhere in space, floating on waves of light. How they gleamed and undulated! She would have been afraid, she thought,—only that James's dark eyes were still looking into hers, with the same expression of adoring love.—Now they were surely in the other world; the glory was too radiant for this! Was it Death? If it were, Death was not, after all, so very awful. What was this multitude rising around her? Angels perhaps: as they rose,

their wings rustled ; and now they sang.

“ Oh Heavenly Jerusalem,
Of everlasting halls !
Thrice blessed are the people
Thou storvest in thy walls !”

“ Thrice blessed are the people,” Gabrielle strove to repeat ; but her tongue would not move. She began to sink ; James sank too ; everything was sinking : down—down—into gulfs of nothingness. She closed her eyes in horror ; then, suddenly, a familiar voice exclaimed, “ I believe she is coming round !” —and she found herself, greatly to her surprise, extended on a sofa in the Vicarage drawing-room ; Olivia bending over her with sal-volatile, and Mrs. Edgecumbe with brandy —while James stood at her feet.

“ What is the matter ?” said Gabrielle, feebly.

“ Nothing, dear ; don’t be frightened. Sip a little of this,” said Mrs. Edgecumbe.

“ You fainted,” said Olivia. “ You should

not have gone to church, dear child. You know I told you—”

“Hush, Olivia; don't worry her with what you told her, now!” said James, peremptorily; and Gabrielle tried to smile at him, all unconscious of Mrs. Edgecumbe's observant eyes.

She was soon so far revived, that Olivia was persuaded to leave her: Mrs. Edgecumbe—who had stayed at home to help a sick nurse—promising every care. The two ladies left the room together; but James lingered behind, to bend over Gabrielle's sofa, and whisper, clasping her hand, that Olivia was quite right—she ought not to have gone to church—in the evening, she should stay at home, and he would stay with her.

“But, James, I should not like you to miss church for me.”

“I'll walk over to Meddiscombe, after

luncheon, then. Hawkins has a three o'clock service. But what a scrupulous child you are!"

"Well, Gabrielle! So you've been and gone and done a regular scene," cried Cissy, rushing in after the service: Olivia, having retired upstairs, with Mrs. Edgecumbe, to inspect a wonderful baby. "I hope you feel properly ashamed."

"I couldn't help it, Cissy," said Gabrielle, laughing: "How was it? Do tell me the whole story."

"Well, my dear, you looked terribly faint, all through the Psalms and Lessons. And when we rose at 'In choir and places where they sing, here followeth the Anthem,' you sat still, apparently more dead than alive. And just as I was whispering to Olivia for salts, and James was beginning to look desperate, your head drooped, and your eyes shut, and your Prayer-book fell, and off you went in a minute."

"But how did I get here, Cissy?"

"James lifted you up, dear, like a feather, and carried you out of church; and Olivia followed, and everybody stared, and Mr. What's-his-name, the churchwarden, looked spasmodic, and made a dash at his pew door, but thought better of it, and returned to his singing; and the clerk rushed into the vestry, and brought forth a decanter, and flew after you; and Jones, the schoolmaster, flew after him. And the school-children began to behave themselves 'most dreadful,' of which I was glad—for it enabled me to relieve my mind, by frowning and shaking my forefinger. Then back came Jones, and cuffed Walter Primmings, and shook Sally Turner, and stuck Jem Giles into the middle of the aisle. And then the clerk came back; and, seeing anxiety depicted on my countenance, paused at the pew door, and whispered consolingly

that the young lady was very bad indeed, and had been taken to the Vicarage. Whereupon I began to think of going to the Vicarage myself; when, suddenly, the door opened, and behold James and Olivia! James looking as well as could be expected, and Olivia considerably better than the same. Which reassured me.—And now, are you really all right, my darling? Seriously, you had no business at church. How did you and Mrs. Edgecumbe get on together? Were you congratulated?"

"Oh, yes. She said she saw the state of things, and—how horrid all that part of it is!" cried Gabrielle, impulsively.

Cissy laughed.

"Never a rose without a thorn, my dear! But to me, the affair itself would be the thorn, and the congratulations the rose. It would be such fun to see the various forms in which the various people would

embody their various views of the correct method of wishing joy ! I should put them all in a book, afterwards : with illustrations. Here comes James, to fetch you and the pony-carriage. Take care that you don't upset her, now, James. She has been sufficiently upset, already."

Gabrielle was glad when evening came, and she and James were alone. For a time, they sat silent : thinking only of one blessed fact—that they were together—peace between them, at last.

James was the first to speak.

" Gabrielle, I want you to explain something : something that you said yesterday. You caught me up—do you recollect ? in the middle of a sentence ; asked me, as if you asked with a purpose, when it happened—"

" When what happened, James ?"

" What I was talking of, at the time. You know. If you have no objection, I

should like to hear what was in your mind."

Gabrielle hesitated.

"I don't like to tell you," she murmured, blushing deeply: "It might have been fancy."

"Forgive my asking:—was not the fancy, in some way, connected with young Godfrey?"

"Yes," acknowledged Gabrielle, in a half-audible tone.

"You thought I was——"

"I thought you seemed a little—only a little——"

"Jealous," said James.

She made no reply; but he saw that her silence meant consent.

"Well, Gabrielle, I confess: it was jealousy that first opened my eyes. I have been jealous of him, desperately jealous. And I had cause to be so."

"Why! I always told you that we were brother and sister—nothing more."

"Yes, you did ; and I believe, now, that, so far as you were concerned, it was true. But he—" James paused. "Perhaps this is hardly a fair question, but—are you sure that you are nothing more than a sister to him?"

Gabrielle burst into a fit of laughing.

"My dear child! what on earth is the matter?"

"Oh, James, I beg your pardon. . But only to think that such an idea should come from you!"

"Why not?" asked James, somewhat puzzled : "It is surely a very natural idea."

"But you never used to think of such things; and you despised people who did."

"Ah!" said James; and, as he spoke, he sighed: "Those days are over."

"The days when you disdained falling in love?"

"Don't say 'disdained,' Gabrielle; I only wished to keep it in its place. And that I

wish still, indeed. You shall hear my views in full, some day; but, for the present, let us enjoy ourselves. I want you to answer my question."

"Well, James, I can't exactly look into Charlie's heart, you know; but I feel almost as positive about it as if I could. The bare notion of his liking me in that way, seems quite preposterous; next to impossible."

"Why, Gabrielle?"

"Why? Why, because—because——" But when she came to search for reasons, she could not find any.

"We have grown up together," was all that came at last.

"Well, there's something in that. And yet—Gabrielle, it is almost beyond my comprehension how any man, not otherwise engaged, could live in constant and familiar intercourse with you, as he has lived, for years, and not love you!"

"That is only because——"

"Well, my child?"

"Because you love me yourself. I think, James, I would almost rather that you cared for me less."

"Less, my darling? Why?"

"I am so afraid of disappointing you; of your expecting more than I can give. When you live with me always, you will find that I am much shallower than you think me now. And you are so deep. I shall not be able to satisfy you, I am sure."

Poor simple child! As if he had ever, for one instant, imagined that she would! As if he had ever, in the highest height of his passion, so much as dreamed of making her the centre of his world: or anything like the centre! His conscience smote him. He felt almost like a hypocrite, sitting there, and holding her clasped to his heart, leading her—so, from her innocent talk and her

innocent fears, it appeared—to suppose herself the first object of his existence, as he was, probably, of hers.

"My dear Gabrielle," he said, "it is the other way. I fear that I shall disappoint you; not you me."

"Oh no!" cried Gabrielle, confidently: "That could never be. I only dread being tempted to—to—"

"Well?"

"To love you too dearly, James."

What! Had she a higher object, then? Did she also fear the predominance of her affections? His interest was roused.

"How do you mean?" he asked.

"I am so afraid lest this earthly love should absorb my heart, and hinder it from fixing first on God."

Something in this speech jarred sorely on something in James's mind; awakened there a sense of baffled craving. Even while re-

solving that—inexpressibly difficult as the execution of such a resolve must be—he would never, after the next year, allow himself to rest in her, to make her his chief delight: he yet desired that she should rest in him, should make him her chief delight, both now and evermore.

“Why, Gabrielle, this is mere casuistry! What in the world has your love for me to do with your religion? Surely, two feelings so distinct, need not clash in any way.”

“Oh, James! I am sorry that you think them so distinct. To me, they seem interwoven, each helping to strengthen the other. Sometimes, I think of this earthly love as a step, by which the Heavenly Love may be more easily reached. Only I feel in such danger of sitting down on the step, and forgetting that above it is another.”

“And when you have mounted to the other,” said James, his tone a little pained,

"you will forget me altogether, I suppose ;
disdain to care for me any more."

"Oh no—no—" cried Gabrielle, eagerly,
clasping his hand : "There the simile ceases,
at once. That Heavenly love is like the
sunshine—it absorbs, without extinguishing,
lesser lights."

"Gabrielle, am I very wicked ? I cannot
resign myself to be to you merely as one
among those lesser lights."

"First among them, James. By far, by
far, the first."

"But no more?"

"More would be idolatry," said Gabrielle,
gently.

Still he was not satisfied. Still, deep
within him, he felt that baffled craving.

"Well!" he said, stifling a sigh ; "Per-
haps, all things considered, we are about on
a par. Not that I am troubled by religious
scruples——"

"Don't say scruples, James. Fears."

"Fears, then. Those don't occur to me. But I still think as I have always thought, as regards the intellect and the affections. And I should not venture, even now, to indulge my love for you, if I were not determined that, cost me what it may, this love shall be to me a secondary, not the primary object."

"I should never wish to see love the primary object on the man's side," replied Gabrielle: "You know what Lord Lovelace said to Lucasta:

'I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.'

And if you were a soldier or a sailor, I could not bear that you should give up your profession for me, James; or, as matters really are, that you should stay away from your magisterial business, your writings, and so forth."

"You have not exactly hit my meaning," said James: "However——"

"Do explain it to me," cried Gabrielle; some indefinable misgiving agitating the surface of her mind.

"No; we won't waste our time in splitting hairs," he answered, rather impatiently: "Besides, for the present—till you are well, at any rate—I mean to relax all rules, and to do as, if I went by my feelings only, I should do always: think of you, and delight in you, and live for you, every day, and all day long."

Gabrielle smiled. These words unfolded to her so beautiful a vision, that she felt as little inclined, as obliged, to spoil it, by dwelling on changes which might never come. So she asked James no more questions; but, after a brief pause, he heard her sigh; and, looking down, saw in her face, a shadow, an expression of pain.

"What is it, Gabrielle?" said he, tenderly.

"Only a thought that crossed my mind—a thought that often troubles me."

"What a child you are for troubling yourself, and making worries out of nothing! I shall have to take wonderful care of you, in mind as well as in body. But this thought; what was it? Or what is it? for I see it still."

"Oh, James!" she said, "I am so afraid—so very much afraid—that I shall die."

In one moment, James forgot, as yesterday he had forgotten, everything save Gabrielle. If the Angel of Death had appeared, at this instant, before him, and had proposed to leave her life untouched, provided that he would resign his high ambitions, his hopes of pre-eminent greatness: the bargain would have been accepted, gladly accepted.

He strained her to his heart as though his clasp could compass, not the frail young

body merely, but the soul : and stay its flight.

"Die, my child!" he cried, his voice hoarse and broken: "You must not speak, you must not think, of such a thing—It would be death to me too!—it would be Hell!"

"Oh, James—hush!" she said, awed; and looked wonderingly up at him. His cheeks were glowing; a strange, passionate fire shone in his eyes. Could this be the same James who, six months back, had seemed so cool and unimpressionable?

"If you love me, Gabrielle, do not talk of dying. You cannot die. It is not possible."

"James—please, please be calm; don't say that. Suppose God should prove it possible, by——"

"He would not—He will not. Gabrielle, stop. I cannot listen."

Then, in a fever of anxiety:

"Have you had that pain in your side again? Do you feel weaker?"

"I think not," began Gabrielle: "But—"

He cut her short, with a hasty gesture.

"That's enough, Gabrielle. So long as you are not worse, we may have every hope that you will soon be better. Now let me hear no more of this; and promise me that you will think no more of it, either."

"I will promise not to worry about it: at least, to try," said Gabrielle, gently.

"I shan't rest till I have got you away, out of this wretched climate, and all to myself, to watch and manage as I like. I shall soon cure you. I am sure that I shall cure you. Say you think so."

And again, as he spoke, he drew her nearer, with that strong, withholding clasp.

"I will say I hope so—with God's blessing. But, James—don't be angry with me—I must tell you just one thing more."

"Make haste, then : get it over."

"James, you may think it silly, but one of the chief reasons why I fear I love you too well, is that the bare idea of death is so terrible to me. Now I ought——"

"Gabrielle—Gabrielle—I can't stand this."

"Only let me finish :—I ought to be able to think of it calmly, even happily ; because, though it would be leaving you, it would be going to God. But, James, I cannot think of it so ; and that grieves me."

"If you could, that would grieve me, I fancy. Well ! you have unburdened your mind ; so let us drop the subject. You are a great deal too scrupulous ; as you will acknowledge when your health comes back.—Now should you like to hear those lines from George Herbert ?"

Gabrielle gladly assented. He opened the quaint old book ; and read until peace, fuller than before, returned to her, and tranquillity to himself.

CHAPTER II.

Courage, poor heart of stone !
I will not ask thee why
Thou canst not understand
That thou art left for ever alone :
Courage, poor stupid heart of stone.—
Or if I ask thee why,
Care not thou to reply.
She is but dead, and the time is at hand
When thou shalt more than die.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

“GODFREY,” said Mr. Hawkins, entering the study where Charlie sat poring, sorely puzzled, over the “Ecclesiastical Polity”: “Godfrey, how are you related to that Miss Wynn who lives with the Gordons?”

Charlie unclasped two inky hands from a somewhat rough head of hair: and looked up.

"We are not related—only friends," he answered : "What of her?"

"She is just engaged—so Edgecumbe tells me—to young Gordon. Settled on Saturday, it seems."

"Oh! I am not at all surprised," said Charlie : "I have had suspicions in that quarter, for some time."

Then his head went down upon his hands again, and his eyes returned to "the judicious Hooker." A quarter of an hour later, however, he rose : and closed the book with a bang. He had read enough, he said ; he was getting muddled : he thought he should go out. It was possible, if Mr. Hawkins would excuse him, that he might not return to luncheon. Of course Mr. Hawkins would excuse him ; and soon, greatly to his relief, he found himself in the open air.

Mechanically, walking as in a dream, he took the road that led to Farnley : steering

straight towards the ostentatious-looking pile which, with its park and grand old woods, formed so prominent a feature of the landscape. Presently he reached the gates ; they stood open : he entered, without knowing why, wandering off under the trees. Beneath his feet, the dead leaves lay in shoals ; he rustled through them, scaring now a stray deer, now a rabbit, but seeing neither : until a sudden dip in the ground brought him to a little hollow, overshadowed by a sycamore. Here a tiny stream trickled lazily down a bit of mossy rock : falling at its foot into a natural basin formed of stones, which the course of years had collected.

The music of the dropping water fell soothingly on Charlie's ear. The tranquillity, the seclusion of the place, seemed to cool his fevered spirit. He paused in his aimless walk ; he threw himself on the grass, beside the stones.

"Men—" says one speaking "out of the deep"—

" Men will be light of heart and glad,
When we are sad ;
Or if perchance with us 'tis light,
With them 'tis night !

" Kind Nature ! but 'tis never thus,
With *thee* and *us* !
But thee, in all our moods we find
Unto our mind."

So, also, it seemed to Charlie, as he lay alone in the hollow; the mossy rock above him, the sycamore boughs rustling gently, the water dropping.

" Oh, Mother kind ! to this fair glen,
From ways of men,
Dear Mother, to thy breast I creep,
And weep—and weep."

Thus the lines end. Thus, after a season, a passion of tears burst from poor Charlie's eyes: bedewing the grass, and the sere leaves whose better days—like his own, he thought—were over.

* ; * * * *

"Catch cold! Sure to catch cold!" said a voice, abrupt but kindly; suddenly breaking upon the stagnant despondency into which Charlie, his outburst over, had subsided. He started to his feet; and met the compassionate gaze of Mr. Morris.

"Godfrey! You'll catch cold, Godfrey;" and, in the tumult of his feelings, the bulky manuscript which, as usual, he carried, fell once more from beneath his arm.

"Never mind them. Never mind them," he said absently, while Charlie, no novice in the work, stooped to pick up the scattered leaves. This adjuration was repeated, at intervals, until all had been collected and restored.

"Poor boy!" he murmured, then: "Poor boy! Blow fallen! Haw?"

"What do you mean, sir?" cried Charlie, turning furiously red, and pretending to be absorbed in his hat, the shape of which was

somewhat disfigured. But Mr. Morris was not to be deceived.

"See how it is. Sorry for you. Very sorry. Come with me."

He thrust his arm into Charlie's, and drew him along, in the direction of the creeper-covered cottage.

"Where do you want me to go?" said Charlie, too much dejected to resist: or indeed, to care, one way or the other, what became of him.

"Want you at my house. Want to talk to you," panted Mr. Morris.

The young man patiently submitted to be dragged over the grass, until the cottage was reached. Mr. Morris conducted him to the study, pushed him down upon a seat, and, standing before him, surveyed him from head to foot.

"Well, sir?" said Charlie, feeling—despite his trouble—that he could have found

it in his heart to add, "I hope you'll know me again!"

"Well, Godfrey? Well, my boy? Now tell me. Don't shut yourself up from me."

The old man tilted a chair which stood at Charlie's elbow, dislodged a pair of boots, and took their place.

"Make a clean breast of it, if that will be any comfort. I feel as a father to you. I do indeed." His hand came down, heavily, but kindly, on Charlie's shoulder.

"You are very good, sir. But . . . I am rather in the dark."

"Ah, now don't—" and there was something of entreaty in his tone—"Don't, I beg of you, shut yourself up from me. I know. I was by you, as you lay on the grass. I saw—heard—forgive me. Went away—came back when you were calmer. My soul yearned over you. Yes. No exagger-

ation. You looked, when you lifted your face, so like . . . so like . . . Ah!"

He paused, with one of his long, groaning sighs: and looked silently, for a while, into the smouldering fire which filled about a quarter of the grate.

"A heavy trial. At first sight, seems a pity. But you must bear; and hope. It is not, bad though it be, what I—You are the only sufferer; *she* is happy: Thank God for that. Ah! if I could have had the same comfort——! But as it was—oh, my God!" he raised his hands, and his dim eyes, from which tears were streaming—"Thou alone knowest—Thou alone—" and again came that sigh. Then calmness.

"But it is over now. All over now. She is at rest."

"Mr. Morris," said downright Charlie, "I can't make it out. Were you ever engaged to my mother? or what?"

"I'll tell you. I'll tell you. The time is come. First, though, let me hear. Was this quite unexpected? Unburden yourself. Let me, do let me, be to you as a father."

And, thus urged, Charlie, always of an open nature, broke down in his reserve. He did not, indeed, expatiate; he did not sentimentalize, or declare that his heart was broken. But—helped out by occasional questions and ejaculations from Mr. Morris—he contrived to tell the few facts, few and simple, of his story. This done, he felt in some degree relieved; he felt also exceedingly grateful.

"I don't know, I'm sure," he said, "why you should take such interest in me and my concerns—"

"Stop!" interrupted Mr. Morris.

He rose, and, fumbling in his pockets, produced a bunch of keys; then crossed the

room, and unlocked an ancient desk, which stood on a chair near the window. In this desk again he fumbled : while Charlie watched him, somewhat puzzled. Finally, he brought to light a couple of letters, tied together by something that had once been pink tape.

“Here,”—he said, returning to his seat—“You shall read these. They will——they will shew you why.”

He untied the tape,—unfolded one of the letters : with a trembling hand.

“It wants some explanation, I see. May be as well to tell you everything. Then you’ll understand, once for all.

“Long ago”—his voice grew dreamy, and his eyes looked out into some spiritual distance—“Long ago, at Leamington, I met her—your mother. Pretty—beautiful—fair hair—an innocent face—eyes like blue veronicas—a heavenly smile. I saw her, and —I loved her.

"But she was a nobleman's daughter ; sought after on every side. And I was a poor curate—plain—insignificant. Not"—a sad smile stole over his face—"Not exactly what I am now—sorrow has somewhat changed me. But still, in all save love, far below her.

"I hung about her—could not help it : thought that it would hurt no one but myself. Talked to her often, and she to me. She was very pleasant, very sweet ; but I took it for mere courtesy. Loved her the more for it—hoped none the more. Never hoped at all, indeed. Why should I ?

"Well ! time wore on, and, at last, a report got about, that there was something between us. Spread through Leamington ; she heard it : so did I. Thought it, in consequence, my duty to go less frequently to the house, and, when I met her, to avoid her. For I believed that such a report, if established,

would pain her ; perhaps disgust her ; whereas, without fuel, it would soon die away, leaving me free to renew our intimacy. But it never was renewed. Never.

“ She noticed the change—connected it and the report together. She thought—this letter will show you what she thought ; and she was piqued. For—for she loved me. It seems strange ; but these things are unaccountable. She did love me, and—O delusion of all delusions most unwarranted ! she imagined that it was without return.

“ She had a high spirit—sensitive too. There was a Colonel Godfrey—your father —ah !—then staying at Leamington. She had refused him once ; but now—he proposed again ; and she accepted him. Poor child ! it was wrong. It was very wrong. But God is merciful. She knew not what she did.”

“ Pray go on,” said Charlie : for Mr.

Morris had relapsed into a dream. He started.

"I had a sister—a dear sister. She is with the angels now; but in those days, she lived with me at Leamington. It happened that she and Lady Rose—your mother—had struck up a friendship; and before the engagement with Colonel Godfrey was a week old, my sister had guessed the whole truth: though she said nothing, at that period, to either of us. But I fell ill: very ill, they tell me. What it was, I hardly know—and whether or no I raved, I know not: but from that time, it got abroad, that the illness was for your mother's sake. And your mother heard. And on the eve of her wedding, she wrote this—this letter. And she left it with my sister, begging that if, ere long, she died, it might be given to me. And the next morning, she—your mother—was married, and went away. And soon

after—how soon I knew not ; in those days, I kept no count of time : it might have been a year, or it might have been two years—but soon after : we heard that she was dead. She had pined from the era of her engagement. And I knew"—an awful grayness overspread the furrowed face—"I knew that I had killed her. No—say nothing—can't talk about it. But I did kill her. Thank God that your trouble has, at least, no such bitterness in it ! My blessed darling, for whom I would willingly have shed my life-blood, drop by drop I killed thee I broke thy heart On me is the guilt of thy marriage.—O Lord, have mercy !"

He paused in anguish : one of those terrible breathless spasms to which, at times, he was subject, distorting his features. Charlie stood up, dismayed ; but Mr. Morris, waving his hand, as if to decline assistance,

stumbled, rather than walked, to the door : and quitted the room.

“The heart knoweth his own bitterness.” There is sorrow, as well as joy, with which a stranger—nay, a friend—intermeddleth not.

The young man, left alone, examined the letters. He opened them with a sense of awe—such as one might feel for something turned up with the soil of a long-closed grave. The first, which seemed as though it would fall to pieces in his fingers—it was so old, and had evidently been unfolded so often—was written in an unformed, almost childish hand ; and blurred with tears. As he read, he fancied that he heard the young pathetic voice pouring out its confession : telling how she had cared for Brian Morris, for him only, from the beginning ; explaining, in simple words, her sad mistake : begging his pardon ; then going on to speak of

her future life, in utter hopelessness—excepting in so far as that a secret presentiment—"something," she called it—whispered that this life would not be long ; that Death would soon come, and make her free.

The second letter, addressed to Miss Morris, shewed how the presentiment had been realized. Charlie recognized the signature as that of his mother's favourite governess : who had brought her up, and had been in the stead of a mother to her. The story of the quiet death was fully and tenderly told : how that long hours of pain had ended, towards evening, in drowsiness : that to this she would not yield, until her little boy had been brought to the bedside, to kiss her, and wish her good night ; after which, composing herself for sleep, and turning her face to the window where the sun was setting, she had closed her blue eyes : and so had died.

She was very happy in her mind, the letter went on to say: glad to have done with life in this weary world. And sorry too, for all that had been wrong and mistaken in her conduct; dying humbly, with the hope to be forgiven, and to start afresh in the world to come.

Colonel Godfrey was not with her; and Charlie knew that her spirit would pass none the less peacefully. He had been no true husband to her. She had left him a message, however:—her “love,” and “please take care of dear baby.” But that other, who might have filled his place; to him no message had come: no sign, whether or not she had thought of him, in those last hours. So careful, evidently, had she been to keep to the end, as far as in her lay, that solemn promise by which she had pledged herself to forsake all other but her wedded husband: to cleave only unto him. It was,

perhaps, the continual struggle so to keep that promise, which had worn her out before her time.

Charlie re-folded the letters : and thanked God that his mother was dead.

Then his thoughts turned to Gabrielle. He might suffer ; must suffer : but Gabrielle was spared. His trouble seemed no longer too hard to bear. It was almost welcome now.

* * * * *

Suddenly the door opened ; and Mr. Morris re-appeared. He looked wistfully at Charlie ; the young man rose to meet him, grasped his hand.

"I am awfully sorry for you," he said ; "I can't tell you how awfully sorry I am."

It was but a poor speech, for the occasion ! Yet it did Mr. Morris good. He returned the grasp, and tried to smile ; and they sat down, side by side, as before.

"I'll tell you what—" said Charlie, after a time: "When I get into my rectory, you must come and make your home with me. I have never thought—" his voice shook a little—"of living alone. I could not stand it, I'm sure. And if for nothing else, for my mother's sake, I should feel it an honour to have you."

"Thanks, my boy. Very kind. We'll consider it, nearer the time. Perhaps, though, before then, I may be gone."

"Gone! Where?" said Charlie, staring.

"Home," answered Mr. Morris, with that distant look in his eyes: "Home. Much to learn yet, that's true. But might be allowed to finish there. Always hoping it."

He pointed to the glass of water, with the cluster of roses, which were never missing from his table.

"See. I have these before me, to keep my hope fresh. In summer, I get wild

ones ; in winter, I beg them from the Park, So that, every day, I look upon a rose— always living, always sweet : and, looking, think of my own Rose, in the garden of Paradise. Yes : all flowers are blessings, but a rose I can never see, without saying in my heart, thank God for it—as for my Rose above !”

He went off into another dream ; and Charlie rose to take leave. But now Mr. Morris, in much penitence, remembered that he had been offered no refreshment. He must, he must indeed, stay and have some ; and Mr. Morris, the while—to put a little heart in him—would read aloud the last few pages of the Introduction to the Treatise on the Missing Ten Tribes.

So the young man resumed his chair, and recruited himself with beef and beer : while his host, seated in the window, and lifting up his voice with right good will, emitted

gusty paragraphs from the closely-written pages : which, but for Charlie, would long since have been scattered, like those of whom they treated, to the winds.

CHAPTER III.

"Twas now most amusing to traverse the shade,
And hear the remarks that were privately made ;
Such whispers, inquiries, and investigations !
Such balancing merits, and marshalling stations !

ANN TAYLOR.

JAMES, in these days, felt himself to be exceedingly proud of Gabrielle ; and for once in his life, his pride was not misdirected. The news of the engagement flew far and rapidly ; and bevies of visitors poured in upon Farnley, to congratulate and to inspect. A rage for making her acquaintance took possession of the neighbourhood. She—her antecedents—her looks—her fortune, or rather, her non-fortune : became a universal topic of conversation. Of all this

Gabrielle was fully aware. She knew that, for the most part, these people who talked to her so pleasantly, who paid her such unwonted compliments, made themselves so unwontedly affable, were taking her measure, the while. Not her bodily measure only, but her mental measure ; and again, not only her mental measure, but the measure of her manners.

For herself, she would willingly have shrunk into the shade, leaving them to judge of her as they chose. But in that case, how would they judge of James, and of James's discernment ? This consideration spurred her on.

"I know I am not fit—" she thought—"to be chosen by him : I who have no beauty, no genius ; who cannot shine in any way, even in society—for I am still continually in fear of making some awkward mistake. But one thing I can do: my very

best to prevent his feeling ashamed of me. Or rather—he is too good and too noble for that—to prevent his having cause to feel ashamed of me, or these people to despise him for loving me."

And this she did prevent; proving herself, even outwardly, as worthy of the position to which she was called, as though she had been born or brought up to it: worthy, indeed, to a degree which no mere advantages of birth or of education could have ensured.

"Gabrielle!" said Cissy, one day, in a tone of deep solemnity: "What in the world have you been doing, to put James in such a state about your behaviour in 'company'?"

"I?" exclaimed Gabrielle, instantly crimson: and looking both puzzled and distressed.

"Yes, you. I was in Olivia's room, and

heard his comments. I always knew that he was absurdly fastidious about young ladies' manners; and as to THE Young Lady, his own peculiar property—she, to satisfy him, must be something super-hyper-superlative: quite a female Lord Chesterfield. So, Gabrielle, think yourself lucky that he found no more fault than he did: instead of looking ready to cry at the bare idea of his finding any fault at all."

"But what fault did he find, Cissy? Do tell me. I will try to mend it."

"Then I won't tell you. Why should you trouble yourself so much about his opinion? Snap your fingers at him, and strike out a new line of manners for yourself; and if he object to them, remind him that tastes differ. But come, Gabrielle—you silly child! I do believe that you are really vexed."

"Please tell me what fault James did

find. It was only a simple thing, I suppose, from what you said just now?"

"To the last degree simple, my dear."

"But what was it, Cissy?"

"Well! I have heard the same quality somewhat vulgarly defined, as 'a footless stocking without a leg.'"

"Now, Cissy——!"

"My dear child, don't look so reproachful. The thing was nothing. He found no fault with you, at all at all—as Paddy would express it."

"But you said that he was 'in a state.'"

"Quite true. A state of glorification. He rushed into Olivia's room, half mad with enthusiasm, and began to rave about your perfections as though they had been the perfections of Plato, or Mephistopheles, or any other of those ancient creatures of whom he is so fond.—I don't mean Mephistopheles,

but I mean somebody else beginning with M ; so 'tis all the same.—And then he—James, not Meph., you know—went on to say, that if you had been brought up in a yard—a court, at least—your manners could not be more perfect, or he more proud of you—your gracefulness, natural ease, etc., etc., etc., etc."

"Oh, Cissy!"—and Gabrielle's face literally shone : " Did he really say that ? "

" Yes ; and more too. Olivia confessed that your pretty behaviour in public had often surprised her, because, before you came to us, you had seen so little of the world. Olivia is so short-sighted. For aught she knows, you may have gone to some academy in Eversfield village, where 'manners' were 'twopence extra ;' and that twopence you may have paid. I was about to suggest this solution to the problem. But James hit on a better."

She paused ; and Gabrielle looked at her, all eyes.

“Open them a little wider, dear, and put in a little more glitter ; and they'll be just like his :—allowing for differences of colour. And he glowed, and looked so triumphant, I was sorely tempted to knock him down ! only I recollect that that would not be a very feminine proceeding : so refrained. And then—his voice as high-and-mighty as the rest—he said : ‘It is innate !’—There, Gabrielle ! When you are married to him, I suppose that, since married people are one, it—whatever it is—will be innate in him too. No doubt that is the secret of his exultation. In praising you now, he is praising himself in the future. Reynard ! And as for you—what do you mean by smiling so absurdly, just because a stuck-up young man chooses to pronounce you his model of manners ? Gabrielle ! Gabrielle !

(By-the-by, I think I shall call you Gaby, for short)—why will you persist in looking so outrageously happy?"

"Why? Because I feel happy," said Gabrielle.

As indeed she did.

About this time, James—somewhat to his disgust, received the following note.

"Thornmoor, Friday.

"**MY DEAR GORDON,**

"So you have come down from your pedestal at last! I rejoice to hear it. But what a close fellow you are! Unless the affair be of mushroom growth: which, in your case, seems hardly probable: you must have been in the very act of such coming down—two-thirds of the way, at least, I'm sure—when I saw you, the other day. And yet you talked . . . ! however, I won't be hard upon you: never mind, now, *how* you talked.

" I suppose I ought to indite a few pretty wishes—' May your bliss be only half what mine is !'—and so forth. Really, though, the weather is too dispiriting—' no lark ' (and I am anything but a lark) ' could pipe to skies so dull and gray.' And albeit that your note of this morning is as like a poker as any note could be, we are old friends, and know each other too well, I hope, to make a fuss about our ps and qs. So you'll excuse me.

" I fear that I shall have to forego the pleasure of seeing you turned out a domestic man : as I am shortly to be dragged all over England, on what my wife calls a round of visits. We start on Monday : alas ! no time is left for making Miss Gabrielle Wynn's acquaintance. The fair enslaver who has enslaved you, must be a sight for sair een. I have been describing her, body and spirit—as I imagine them—to my wife : whom, by

some injudicious contrast, I have contrived, in the process, to offend. She threatens, consequently, that she will speak to me no more to-day. *Entre nous*, I feel that I can bear it.

“ May you ever—to sum up my desires for your matrimonial happiness—be as unable to enter into the spirit of this last sentiment, as I doubt not that you are, at this moment! And believe me always, my dear Gordon,

“ Yours to command,

“ GEORGE PETER RAYNTON.

“ P.S.—My wife—ignoring the threat—has just begged me to return your kind remembrances into your own bosom ; together with all proper congratulations. Whereof she dictateth fitting words ; which I repress, being chary of my ink ; and once more, Vale ! ”

James did not show this letter to Gabri-

elle : judging that its persual would scarcely tend to bias her in his friend's favour. For himself, he felt, at first, exceedingly displeased with Raynton ; but his displeasure was soon forgotten in the more important considerations which at present filled his mind. The compulsory brevity of his engagement, and the long absence that was to follow, involved a great press of business ; and James was, at this time, every day—now and then, all day—closeted with steward, solicitor, or tenants. He insisted that the wedding should not be postponed beyond the end of the month. The winter abroad would be of no use, he said, unless they started, at latest, then. Olivia sighed over the *trousseau* ; but James was firm. Which was the most important, he should like to know—the *trousseau*, or Gabrielle's life ? At length, by common consent, the day was fixed for the thirtieth of November.

Mr. Lascelles, her father's friend and James's co-executor, was, at her own desire, to give the bride away. She also, as a special favour, begged leave to invite the Barbers; whereupon James informed her that she should invite all Eversfield, if she chose: and the result was that, not all Eversfield, but Mr. and Mrs. Barber, with their eldest girl, were bidden—greatly to their pride and glory—to the marriage feast. The house in Sir Philip Peers's park was already in course of preparation for Olivia and Cissy; but it was agreed that they should remain at Farnley during the winter.

And now all preliminary arrangements were complete; and Gabrielle began to realize that—as Cissy expressed it—her single life was in a rapid decline.

One afternoon, about a week before her marriage, she was sitting alone in the drawing-room. James had just started for Lon-

don, not to return until the eve of the great day. He was then, with his best man, a young cousin, Lord Murray by name, to dine at Farnley, and afterwards proceed to a shooting-box which Lord Murray possessed in the neighbourhood : whence, on the following morning, they would together drive to church.

Thus—with the exception of a single brief and crowded evening—Gabrielle would see no more of James, until they met to be made one. Thinking of this, and of all that lay before her, a loud ring at the hall door bell escaped her notice. She was therefore somewhat startled, when, in the ante-room, she heard a plaintive voice :

“ Oh ! on no account disturb Miss Gordon. I wish to see Miss Wynn, and Miss Wynn alone. My sweet Euphrosyne, will you oblige me by picking up my fan ? ”

“ Lady Louisa Pembroke and Miss Pem-

broke!" announced Wilcox's stentorian tones. Immediately afterwards, followed by Euphrosyne, Lady Louisa entered. Her flaxen curls were so arranged, that they almost met across her face; but room was left for the large light eyes to transfix Gabrielle with a mournful and significant gaze. Solemnly and noiselessly, she crossed the room; suffered her plump hand to be taken and dropped; and subsided into a chair.

"Well, Gabrielle! how are you?" cried Euphrosyne: "Our bridesmaids' dresses came home this morning. They look so pretty! and Miss Reinhardt thinks——"

"My sweet Euphrosyne," said Lady Louisa, waving her fan: "I am sure that, to oblige *me*, you will temporarily deny yourself, by remaining silent."

And silent Euphrosyne became: while

Gabrielle, in some trepidation, wondered what was about to happen.

"Gabrielle! this is a solemn time for you."

"Yes."

"A time of awful import. You may have thought me remiss for not calling upon you sooner; but my visit was purposely postponed. I believed that what I had to say, would be more effectual, said Now. Now, when you must, at length, have begun to realize the true nature of your position."

Lady Louisa paused, laid down her fan, and opened a gold smelling-bottle.

"My sweet Euphrosyne," said she, inhaling its strong odours: "My little innocent child! you must not listen. Go away, and sit in the carriage."

"I think—" said Gabrielle, trembling at the bare idea of being left alone with this alarming Lady Louisa—"I think she could

hear nothing at that far table ; and there are some new books——”

“Oh yes, mamma : the books look so delicious ! I'll stop my ears, if you like,” burst in Euphrosyne.

“My sweet Euphrosyne !” said Lady Louisa, mildly : “ Is it probable that you, or any one else, should find it necessary to adopt, at such a distance, such a measure, to avoid hearing Me ? Your thoughtlessness, my child, continually lays me open to misunderstanding. If Gabrielle did not know me, what kind of voice would she imagine that I possessed ? But you mean no harm ; the young do not consider. Kiss me : and retire.”

Euphrosyne obeyed : flying, delighted, to examine the new books. Then Lady Louisa put forth two fat fingers, and pressed them upon Gabrielle's wrist.

“ Gabrielle, what I am about to say, I say

for your own good. It is pity, true pity, that actuates me."

"Pity!" Gabrielle could not help exclaiming. It seemed to her, that she had never stood less in need of this amiable commodity!

"Pity," repeated Lady Louisa: "I am glad to think that my trials have not, as yet, closed my heart to the trials of my fellow-creatures. It has ever been my misfortune, to feel 'for another's woes' as though they were my own. I feel for you. Yes, Gabrielle. You are an orphan; and I am a mother. I feel for you deeply."

"You are very kind, Lady Louisa. But indeed I am quite happy."

"Do not attempt to deceive me," said Lady Louisa, oscillating her flaxen ringlets: "I know what it is to feign merriment, even frivolity, while wretchedness preys beneath. But, with me, you may cast off every dis-

guise. Another week : and it will be too late. Now is your time. Unburden yourself, as to a mother."

"I have really nothing to unburden, Lady Louisa," said Gabrielle laughing.

"That hollow, hollow laugh! Let me lay the case before you. Gabrielle, I speak from experience. Riches cannot make happiness."

"I never supposed that they could."

"Neither riches : nor the gaud and glare of the world. Happiness lies in the heart. My child, a country parsonage—humble though it appear—might become, if shared with him you love, a Paradise on earth."

"But you see," said Gabrielle, colouring, "James does not happen to live in a country parsonage."

"No ; *James* does not"—with invidious emphasis: "Some one else, however—some one whose name is written, or I much

mistake, deep in your soul—does. Or rather—will. Gabrielle! now, as a last resource, I offer my assistance in restoring you to peace."

"I am at peace, thank you," said Gabrielle.

But Lady Louisa took no notice.

"Your cheek is pale. You cough. You are wasting away—"

"I am much better than I was; and the doctors think that Pau will quite cure me," said Gabrielle.

But still Lady Louisa took no notice.

"Your cheeks glow with a false radiance; but your heart is ill at ease—"

"Then it was never well at ease," said Gabrielle.

But neither now did Lady Louisa take notice.

"Tell me, my child. What is it that divides you. It cannot be *pique*? It cannot, surely, be jealousy? He loves you

alone : as you—although you own it not—love him."

"I have owned it ; and next week, I hope to own it publicly," said Gabrielle.

And, this time, Lady Louisa did take notice.

"You cannot deceive me, Gabrielle. You know to whom I refer. Not to Mr. Gordon—that cold, sharp young man :" Lady Louisa shuddered, remembering her interview with James : "But to your first love —my dear, your dear, Charlie. To-day I am come to tell you that, even yet, you can retrace your steps : that, if you will resign your dreams of lucre and of gaud, and will consent to be freed from this terrible engagement——"

"What terrible engagement ?" said Gabrielle.

"I"—continued Lady Louisa—"will receive you : harbour you in my own house.

People will talk, no doubt ; ill-natured reports will be spread : but what will this be to the joy of your deliverance ? I am come prepared to take you back with me now—”

“ Back with you now ! ” An exclamation of unmitigated horror had nearly escaped Gabrielle.

“ Back to peace. Back to a home. Thence—with my assistance—you can write to Mr. Gordon, and explain, that the intervention of an experienced and broken-hearted friend, has opened your eyes, and has shown you that it would be perjury to——”

“ Lady Louisa ! ” said Gabrielle, rising ; “ forgive me : but I can hear no more of this.”

Then, as Lady Louisa stared, taken by surprise, she went on :

“ I believe that your intentions, at any rate, are kind ; or I could not bring myself

to tell you what, once for all, I now do tell you : that I have never loved anyone in the way which you mean, excepting James, my future husband ; and that I shall love him only, for ever."

Her eyes shone, as she spoke ; her colour brightened. Lady Louisa gazed helplessly ; and thought of calling to her sweet Euphrosyne to ring the bell—for Gabrielle was hysterical. But, fortunately, at this juncture, the clock happened to strike ; and diverted her attention. She rose, observing that she had not thought it was so late ; she was expecting friends at home : she must go. All that remained was to hope that Gabrielle might be happy. Gabrielle had chosen her own path ; repentance had been offered and refused. Her friend could only hope—in a voice which signified that it was hope against hope—that Gabrielle might be happy.

"Thank you," said Gabrielle : "Humanly speaking, there seems no doubt of it."

Lady Louisa sighed, and solemnly embraced her: much as an injured benefactress might bid farewell to a criminal *protégée*, about to ascend the gallows. And then, for the space of a minute, she stood, her fat hands folded on her fan: regarding Gabrielle, as that benefactress might regard that *protégée*, sorrowful yet forgiving. And then she sighed again, again oscillating the flaxen ringlets; and then she murmured: "I bear no malice, my child. My sympathies will be ever at your command." And then—just as Gabrielle began to fear that she had thoughts of resuming her seat—she turned: and went softly away.

"My sweet Euphrosyne," said she, when she was shut up with her daughter in the carriage; "I shall permit you and your

innocent young sister to rank among that wretched young creature's bridesmaids, solely on account of the awful practical lesson which I expect the scene to afford. Now mark my words : and take warning for your own time, when it comes : 'Tis hard to give the hand, Euphrosyne, where the heart can Never be."

" But, mamma : Gabrielle and Mr. Gordon are devoted to each other. Everyone says so ; and her face is sunshine itself."

" I do not expect to be heeded, my sweet Euphrosyne," said Lady Louisa, smoothing her ringlets: "The young abhor counsel. It is their nature ; and one must not blame them. Can you, without fatigue, pick up my fan ?"

Charlie was often, at this time, sorely embarrassed, not to say annoyed, by the ostentatious compassion which his aunt appeared to consider his due. She would gaze at him for five minutes together, while

he chatted with his cousins ; and then, suddenly turning away, would sigh, and murmur under her breath : “ Poor Charlie !”— Or she would open a book of poetry, hunt out some consolatory passage, and, beckoning him to her side, read it aloud, in a sentimental tone. Or she would treat him as an invalid, and gently reprove her sweet Euphrosyne, for seating herself, when he was by, in the most comfortable chair ; and, at meals, implore him to eat, at least enough to support nature : whereas he was probably, at that very period, engaged in eating considerably more. These delicate attentions, being often repeated, became at length so burdensome, that the young man began to fight shy of Lorton ; and Lady Louisa, shaking the flaxen ringlets, lamented to Euphrosyne, that their gay-hearted Charlie was fast subsiding into a soured recluse.

All this while—to exchange fancy for

reality—Charlie was manfully battling with the apathy which, at first, threatened to overwhelm him, and to persuade him that nothing, worth living for, remained to him any more. The struggle speedily told upon his outward appearance. His youthful rudeness faded to an indefinite sunburnt hue ; he lost flesh ; and over the simple, honest countenance, stole a shade of sadness which bade fair to become habitual.

Gabrielle observed it ; and she tried to be very kind and loving to him : but, restrained by some secret consciousness, asked no questions, made no remarks. Mr. Morris observed it ; and his heart ached. Cissy observed it.

“Mr. Godfrey,” said she, one day, having encountered him in the park : “Mr. Godfrey, don’t think me rude ; but—you are looking so ill, so out of sorts, at least—I feel it my duty to remind you that, in this

'ere world, if we would keep our spirits up to the mark, we must occasionally flog them up to it. And—forgive me—would not your spirits be the better for a little flogging, now?"

"Sometimes, you see, Miss Gordon"—said Charlie, with a faint smile—"one's spirits cut away altogether. In that case, one can't get at them : even to flog."

"Nonsense!" said Cissy, frowning : "They never cut away altogether. They skulk, now and then ; and they should at once be hunted out, punished, and set to work again."

"Yes : when you have no particular worry, it is all very well to talk of the duty of perpetual cheerfulness, and so forth. But there are times—"

He paused, glancing at his companion. Her dark bright eyes were turned in his direction ; and so pretty she looked, so winning—for her, so gentle and so sympa-

thizing,—that his reserve suddenly melted. He went on, talking as the words came.

"There are times when it is as much as a fellow can do, to get along at all. Such energy as he has, is employed in that; his spirits must fare as they may."

"Yes, I know, Mr. Godfrey. This world is certainly a most tantistical—I mean, tantalizing—world. All the things in it seem to be turned upside down or inside out; and so to go lumbering hither and thither, just as the fancy takes them. They run against each other; and they knock each other down; and they produce all manner of awkward accidents. I believe I was wrong about the spirits; I beg your pardon."

"No, I think, so far as you went, you were right. I hate to see a fellow pull a long face every time that his affairs don't go quite as he would have them. Generally

speaking, we're all bound to look on the bright side ; only, now and then——”

“ Now and then, we can't : which brings us back to our starting-point. This is arguing in a circle ! ” said Cissy : “ Don't think me an utter heathen ; but when I look round, and see all the bothers : the nice people who are wretched, and the nasty ones who are cock-a-hoop, and so on : I feel so angry—as if I could hardly bear it ! It does seem such a shame.”

“ Miss Gordon, you shouldn't say that,” answered Charlie. Cissy pouted.

“ Don't be cross with me, Mr. Godfrey,” she cried, in a spoiled-child tone : “ Why shouldn't I say it ? I wouldn't teach it to my Sunday-School class, you know ; but you are not in my class. And if I feel it——”

“ You should try not to feel it,” replied Charlie, in his downright manner.

"But, Mr. Godfrey, I possess two points in common with Susan Nipper: 'I am not a stock; and neither am I a stone.' I can't look on things as things and no more. I must feel something."

"Well, then—feel patient."

"But I've got no patience in me. And what am I to be patient for? The coming of the Cocqcigrues? Because I don't believe that the Cocqcigrues will come: whatever Kingsley may say. As I grow in years, Mr. Godfrey, I grow in wisdom. Without trust, one can't be patient; and I know the world too well, now, to trust it."

"You quoted Dickens, a moment ago. There is a sentence—in *Bleak House*: I think of it so often. 'Not this world; oh, not this! The world that sets this right.'"

Cissy was silent; and a long pause ensued.

"Mr. Godfrey," she said, at length, speaking impulsively, and drawing a little, a step,

nearer to his side; "Mr. Godfrey, I do so wish that I could make you happy again!"

"Thank you, Miss Gordon," was Charlie's sole reply. But somehow he felt strangely soothed.

"I hope you won't stop coming to Farnley, because Gabrielle is married. It will relieve my misery to talk about her; for I expect to be miserable all the winter. I have grown so used to her, that I shall feel like a chrysalis minus the moth."

"There is certainly a wonderful charm about her," he said. And Cissy, seeing that he was just in the state to find a melancholy satisfaction in speaking and hearing of Gabrielle and Gabrielle's good qualities: proceeded—strolling by his side, in a highly improper manner—to enlarge for three quarters of an hour, at least, upon these fruitful themes.

"Poor fellow!" she thought: as, after-

wards, she slowly mounted the stairs to her own room : "It *is* a shame, whatever he may say. And yet—no, he is right : I ought not to feel that ; and it won't be a shame in the end. There ! he's taught me a lesson.—I'll try to comfort him, though ; yes, I will—with all my might and main. He shall talk about Gabrielle till he makes me sick ; perhaps longer—but that depends ! And I'll chatter, and raise his spirits, and hunt out books for him. I wonder if 'Cecil's Visit to the House of Mourning,' would be any consolation ? I fancy not ; and my giving it might look personal. However, I'll do what I can. More, I cannot."

And Cissy, the unusual gravity of her steps relaxing into a dance, flew down the corridor, singing :

"Weep no more, Charlie, weep no more!
Thy sorrow is in vain.
For girls once married, the heaviest sighs
Will ne'er make single again!"

CHAPTER IV.

Art is much, but love is more.
O Art, my Art, thou'rt much, but love is more !
Art symbolizes Heaven, but Love is God
And makes Heaven.

ELIZABETH BARRET BROWNING.

"BLESS me, my dear!" said Mrs. Barber: "You do ought to be 'appy, indeed! What a house this is! I had pictured nothing half so grand! And all in such style, too! I only hope it mayn't spoil Jenny for 'ome!"

"She will be here too short a time," said Gabrielle, smiling: "'And there's no place like home,' after all, you know."

"Well! I trust she'll think so. But now I want to hear all about you, my love.

And lor' me ! how sly you've been ! Why, this must have been brewing all the while you were at Eversfield ; and yet, as I mentioned to Mr. Barber, never a word did you once 'int on the subject ! What's more, I had no guesses : which was mortifying : for, between you and me, I pride myself on being rather sharp in those matters. And Mr. Barber—good gracious me, my dear ! how Mr. Barber did laugh at me ! Only the day before we heard, 'ad I been saying : ‘Mark my words, Mr. Barber : Gabrielle Wynn will never marry. There has she been, six months or more, in the 'ouse with that fascinating Mr. Gordon ; and, bless you ! if she were a block of marble, he couldn't make less impression ! Mark my words, Mr. Barber,’ I said : ‘Gabrielle Wynn is not of a marrying sort.’ Well ! the very next morning, came your letter. Lor' me, my dear ! I never was more put about in my

life. And 'ow Mr. Barber did laugh ! Oh, 'ow he did laugh !"

Mrs. Barber laughed herself ; long and loud : and Gabrielle could not help joining.

"Now, my dear, will you be kind enough to tell me the names of some of these people ? I feel that bewildered among them all, I hardly know where I am ! As I said to your cousin Cissy—By-the-by, Gabrielle, what a remarkably pretty girl that Cissy is!"

"Yes—and remarkably nice too."

"She looks it. And so stylish ! Such an air ! I can't keep my eyes off her. And those young ladies there, my dear : who are they ?"

"Those are Jessie and Bertha Gordon. I told you about them, when I sent you the list of my bridesmaids."

"Ah ! to be sure. There's a strong look of the family in them. Not quite so stylish as Miss Cissy : but very well, very elegant,

take them all together. And that old gentleman with the floppety coat?"

Thus, greatly to her own satisfaction, Mrs. Barber questioned and commented, until Cissy—seeing from afar that Gabrielle was tired—contrived to decoy her away.

The last evening of Gabrielle's maiden life was drawing to a close. A large party was assembled in the drawing-room; the house was full of friends and relations: the majority of whom were entire strangers to her, before—a few hours ago—she was introduced in the capacity of bride-elect. It had been an exciting day; and now she had contrived to slip into a quiet corner, half hidden by the harp: where she might, for a little while, sit silent, and think of the morrow.

But no sooner was Mrs. Barber gone, than she was pounced upon by the two shy girls: whose congratulations, instantly pour-

ed forth, were eager, fresh from the heart ; and full of awe. Cousin James—oh dear ! would not Gabrielle feel it a great honour to be his wife ? They had always felt it an honour to be his cousins merely ! And then—would not Gabrielle have to read a great deal, to be able to talk to him ? And would not the contrast tempt her to despise other people ? But oh dear ! Jessie did hope that she would try not to despise *them*. To be despised by Gabrielle, would make them so very wretched !

They were still discoursing, and being reassured, upon this subject; when Olivia summoned them to play a duet ; and Gabrielle was once more alone.

“ Happy ? ” said a voice at her elbow—
“ Happy ? ”

She looked up ; and saw Mr. Morris.

“ Thank you, I am very happy indeed,” she answered. He seated himself beside

her; and during several minutes, surveyed her in wistful silence.

"'Should'st Thou, to try me'—Know that? Eh?"

"I think not—" said Gabrielle, only half understanding. On he went, without further parley, in his dreamy, sing-song tones: swaying himself backwards and forwards, and gazing, as usual, far into scenes unknown.

"'Should'st Thou, to try me,
With all supply me,
Nature requireth,
Or heart desireth,—
Whisper this counsel of love in my breast:
God is the greatest,
The fairest, the sweetest—
God is the purest,
The truest, the surest—
And of all treasures, the noblest and best.'

That," said Mr. Morris, bending towards her—"is a Fact."

"I know it," said Gabrielle, gently.

"You know it? Happiness won't hurt

you, then. Be as happy as you like."

He rose; but still hovered round her chair.

" You ought to be very thankful, Miss Wynn! So many disappointed! So many hungering and thirsting—in vain, all their lives, for this: this that has come to you at the beginning of your life. All will be right There, no doubt. But here—you ought to be very thankful, Miss Wynn."

He turned abruptly, and vanished; and Gabrielle saw no more of him. But she was haunted by his words; and with them came thoughts of Charlie. Charlie had not been disappointed? Charlie was not hungering and thirsting

She herself, by-the-by, was hungering and thirsting for something—some one, rather—at this moment. She wanted James. He had only just before dinner returned from London. Very soon, he would go away

again. She wished that he would come to her for a little while—she should sleep so much more peacefully. Where was he? Oh, at the further end of the room : sitting by Olivia. Olivia was talking ; he was silent and thoughtful,—very thoughtful : as Gabrielle, now well versed in his moods, discerned. Suddenly he looked up, looked in her direction ; their eyes met—he saw, he smiled at her.

“Thank God”—thought Gabrielle—“that I have lived to be smiled on so !”

The craving for his presence, for one short talk with him, increased. She rose restlessly, left her corner, and went to a table where Cissy and another young lady were turning over photographs.

“What cathedral is that, Cissy ?” she asked ; but paid no attention to the answer.

“Gabrielle,” said James’s voice at her side. An exclamation of “Oh, how glad I

am!" trembled upon her lips. She restrained it just in time.

"Gabrielle, I want to speak to you. Come here—out of the way of those girls."

He retired to a little distance; she followed, willingly enough: although conscious that Cissy was looking satirical, and that the young lady was watching, under cover of her hand.

"Gabrielle, I shall have to go directly; and I have seen nothing of you."

"You will see enough of me after to-morrow," said Gabrielle, blushing and smiling.

"Yes, but—these next fourteen hours! I must get you alone for a few minutes. Could not you contrive to slip away, presently—to the school-room? I will follow as soon as possible."

Gabrielle agreed: succeeding, by judicious management, in escaping unobserved. The school-room candles were not lighted;

and the fire was low. She stood in the dusk, resting her forehead against the cool marble of the mantelpiece : and waited.

A step in the hall ; the door was gently opened ; James entered, walked straight to the fireplace, and, without a word, drew her to a seat upon the low sofa which stood close by. Then he sat down beside her, and took her into his arms. Just under her head, she felt his heart—beating impetuously.

During several minutes, there was silence. Suddenly, James heaved a deep sigh.

“ Oh, this is something like rest :—at last ! Gabrielle, if you only knew how I have been craving, all the week, every hour of the week, for you ! ”

“ And so have I for you,” she ventured shyly to whisper. But he did not seem to hear her.

“ Once—I could not have believed it.

You have transformed my whole nature.
All within me, since I knew you, is changed.
But I am not sure—" he added, under his
breath—" that it is changed for the better."

"What do you say?" asked Gabrielle, not catching these last words. James was silent; and she did not repeat the question. She was content to be silent also: thinking only of the bliss of being so near him, of feeling his arms so close about her, of knowing that he so loved her, of hearing him so speak.

Far other thoughts, meanwhile, were stirring in the heart which she still felt, beating so passionately, beneath her head.

"This that I dreaded—" he mused—" is come. I am completely under her power. My life, all that I practically value in my life, is bound up in her, and in her love. She is my world, the pulse of my existence. And is not this according to my fears? Has not passion taken possession of me, blinding

my eyes, perverting my judgment, yes, and drawing down my aspirations? Once, my mind was occupied by subjects of real importance, subjects in some degree befitting the dignity of man. Now this young weak girl—" and he looked down on her—" absorbs me utterly. I cannot think a thought in which she does not mingle ; I cannot wish a wish in which she has no part. I cannot enter her presence without feeling this wonderful magnetic power : that draws me irresistibly : that forces me to acknowledge her as, against my will, my sovereign, my conqueror.—And shall I remain contented with this thraldom ? For thraldom it is. Yes, though the chains be perfumed, golden even, they are chains still. Shall I passively submit to them ? . . . Never :" and Gabrielle felt a sudden, almost convulsive tightening of the clasp that enfolded her hand : " Never must any external power

govern me. I will be my own master; I will be self-sufficient: whatever the cost. I will fight against this—this infatuation, to the death; and I will conquer."

The clasp relaxed; he sat calm, pale, determined. Afterwards came the reaction.

"My darling—My precious darling—" he breathed, half aloud: then, in his soul, went on.

"For a little while, at least, thou mayest be to me what, God knows, I would keep thee ever, if I could also keep my self-respect! For a little while, I may bend to thee, give myself wholly up to thee: and so I will. The struggle will come soon enough. Meanwhile, I will be happy . . . and make thee happy."

And, again looking down on her, a thought crossed him. The love was not all on his side. How would she regard the change which must ultimately come?

"Gabrielle—" said he—"Supposing, after a time, when the first flush of our happiness is over; and we return to the common routine of life: supposing—I cannot answer for myself—that I found it necessary—on account of my writings and so forth—to leave you often alone; to shut myself up, away from you; in fact, to seem, as compared with my former conduct, neglectful, even indifferent: supposing this, what would you think, Gabrielle? how should you take it?"

He paused, in some anxiety; the more so, since her answer was long in coming.

"I think—" she said, at last—"I think and hope that I should take it as a natural transition: such as, sooner or later, most people, I suppose, must go through—from the romance to the business of life. Of course I don't expect that your love for me will shew itself, always, exactly as it does

now. And I know what grand projects are in your mind; and, James, I will try—indeed, I will try—never to be exacting, or jealous of your time, or an encumbrance in any way. What I want . . . what I desire above all things . . . what I lay awake nearly the whole of last night, praying for . . . is . . .”

She hesitated; some strong emotion choked her voice.

“Is—?” repeated James, bending his head.

“To be a good and faithful wife to you—” and she clung closer to his breast: “To further, not to hinder, all that you do, good or great; to live, not to myself, but, under God, to you, who are better than myself; and at last—” her tone faltered—“when life here is done, to rise with you, to Heaven . . . for evermore.”

She clasped his hand, and, by an uncon-

trollable impulse, raised it to her lips. And he felt it bedewed with her tears, her holy tears. He drew her nearer, but more reverently, to his heart—as one might draw an angel ; and in that moment broke on him a conviction, that, not philosophy, not knowledge, not anything merely of the intellect, but love—love that he had despised—was the highest heritage of man. He saw, as by an inspiration, that while philosophy reforms, love regenerates ; that while knowledge, on earth, at least, is finite, love is infinite ; that the substratum, as it were, the fundamental idea of the universe, the principle from which all other ideas radiate, as from a centre, is the principle of love. And that in this, as in most human things, are varying degrees : certain of which are generally necessary for the full attainment of the rest. The baby knows only the love of his mother ; to this a few years adds friendship ; a few more,

the tie that is “made in heaven :” and each contributes something towards the perfect development of the celestial love, the highest of all.

For the first time, it seemed to James, that the phase upon which he had now entered, was surely one of the most divine among the earthly phases. Would he then be raising or sinking himself, when he forced it into an inferior place in his economy? This question staggered him. He saw life, and the objects of life, in a new, a glorious light. But all at once he remembered that these feelings—every feeling connected with Gabrielle—had come on him unawares, without any effort of will ; in fact, against his will. This—why, this was pleasure, delight! There was nothing in this to be proud of; nothing to exult over; no loophole for the laurels of self-mastery.

The window which had suddenly opened in

his soul, and had let in a gleam from Infinity, with equal suddenness closed; and the gleam was shut out. He remained where he had been before; but he was weary of reasoning; he determined, for the present, to rest satisfied with feeling. Feeling how sweet it was to sit thus at Gabrielle's side; her head upon his breast, his arms enclosing her; moreover, to know that, in a few hours, she would be entirely his own.

And stoicize as he might, resolve as he might, he yet found deep comfort in the knowledge that, after all, no stoicism, no resolution, could unclasp "the marriage band," or unfit "the spousal ring," or unsay the solemn vows which to-morrow would unite them—her to him, and him to her—in the sight of God and man.

CHAPTER V.

So these lives that had run thus far in separate channels,
Coming in sight of each other, then swerving and flowing
asunder,
Parted by barriers strong, but drawing nearer and nearer,
Rushed together at last,—and one was lost in the other.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

“HALF-PAST seven, Miss Wynn.”

Gabrielle started from the dreamless sleep into which, after several wakeful hours, she had fallen; started, opened her eyes, and looked bewildered.

“Why are the bells ringing, Susan?”

Susan stared, simpered, smiled.

“They’re a-ringing for you, I expects, Miss Wynn.”

Then Gabrielle, fully awake by this time, recollect ed. It was her wedding-day.

She rose hastily, anxious to secure a few minutes of quiet, before the bustle should begin. When she was dressed she went to the window, and there knelt, looking out. The morning was somewhat dull—gray and dim; one which might not improbably end in rain. The park, beneath its leafless trees, lay still and sad, no living creature visible. But a flag waved from the church-tower, and the bells rang on, telling of hope and gladness beyond the power of trees, however bare, of skies, however dun, to blight or darken.

And Gabrielle, as she listened, recalled the time when she had first looked from that window; when, in all the landscape, the moon had seemed to her the one object that spoke of home. Now, there was not an inch of ground about the place, that she did not, for its owner's sake, love. A truer, a more congenial home, on earth, she could

not picture. To her, as to Abraham, had been given an abiding portion in the land wherein she was a stranger.

Then she thought of her father—gazing far into the gray heights of sky, as though she expected to see that disembodied spirit smiling down on her and her happiness. Full as was her cup, one further drop was needed to crown it to the brim. She could not, even now, feel satisfied without her father's blessing. But she bowed her head, after a while, and craved, instead, a blessing of Our Father Who is in Heaven.



"How have you slept, dear?" said Olivia, entering an hour later. "You look pale and tired. All this excitement is very bad for you; but it will soon be over now."

"Yes; it will soon be over. Come and sit by me on the sofa. I must say a few

words to you before I go, and before the bustle begins."

Olivia sat down ; and Gabrielle nestled to her side,

" Olivia, I have never thanked you for all your great kindness——"

" My dear Gabrielle !"

" No, let me speak. I have never thanked you ; but I have felt it none the less. Ever since I knew you, you have treated me as if I had been your sister or your child ; you have done all that you could to make up to me for my loss, to make me well and happy. And Olivia, I can never, never forget it ; I shall be grateful all my life ; and you know what Promises are made to those who are kind to the fatherless and the homeless."

" My dear little grateful child !" said Olivia, trying to stop her, yet feeling in her heart the sweetness of the knowledge that here, at least, she had succeeded in her con-

stant endeavour to lighten the burdens of her fellow-creatures.

"And there is something more"—persisted Gabrielle: "All through my engagement I have wondered, more than I can tell you, at your generosity and unselfishness. What James has been to you, for years and years, I know—or I can guess; and now a stranger comes and takes him from you, and drives you out of your home. Yet I have never seen in you any jealousy, or mortification, or even regret. You have never said a word, or looked a look, to make me feel uncomfortable or intruding."

"If I had, it would be unpardonable."

"You think so, because you are so good. But I am sure that I could never, in your place, behave as you have behaved. Outwardly, you are always calm, but inwardly, I know, you have gone through many a bitter struggle. And, Olivia, though here

you may be lonely, you will have a crown in Heaven ; I am certain of it : a bright, bright crown."

Olivia could not speak ; she only drew Gabrielle closer.

" And I have just one thing more to say. You know, I believe, how"—her voice trembled a little—" how I love him—James. That alone would lead me to do all I could to brighten his home, to be a real ' helpmeet.' But, Olivia, the thought of you, and of your kindness, will seem to make this doubly incumbent on me. I shall know that it is the best way, the only earthly way, in which I can repay you. And I give you my solemn promise that I will ever strive to repay you so, looking to God for the strength and wisdom which I have not in myself. Will such a promise comfort you, dear Olivia ? "

For answer, Olivia fell upon Gabrielle's

neck, and wept ; while Gabrielle, reversing for the time their respective positions, soothed her with a thoughtful consideration which did not often, now-a-days, fall to poor Olivia's lot.

Their interview was quickly terminated, however. The gong sounded, and Olivia went down to preside at the first breakfast : Gabrielle, with Cissy for her companion, breakfasting, or making a feint of it, upstairs. Cissy appeared with swollen eyes, and below them two deep red marks : in which condition she made a violent rush at Gabrielle ; and burst out crying.

“ Well, Miss Cissy ! if you go on in this way ”—observed Talbot, who happened, just then, to enter : “ If you go on in this way, all I can say is—your appearance will be a blemish in the procession.”

And Talbot, who, being an old servant, felt herself at liberty to admonish Miss Cissy

as she chose, swept past them with a majestic glance, in which contempt and a strong sense of injury were blended.

“Should I do it, if I could help it, you stupid thing ? ” cried Cissy, stamping her foot. Then—amused, in spite of herself, at her own impetuosity—she broke, her face still covered with tears, into a peal of laughter ; which subsiding, she cried again—and afterwards laughed again : somewhat to Gabrielle’s alarm.

“Oh, those noisy bells ! they’ll drive me mad. I wish they would hold their tongues. Gabrielle, why did I ever see you ? Or, since that was inevitable, why did you take it into your head to marry James. Oh dear ! it is so horrid. Horrid—horrider—horridest. What shall I do, when you are gone ? ”—and a vehement hug ensued.

“You call me Undine ; did not Undine cry her life away ? Well, so shall I. When

you come back, you will see a new fountain in the garden. Wilson will tell you that it is all that remains of Miss Cicely. A marble slab, erected near, will present the following inscription :

‘Afflictions sore, long time I bore,
Olivias were in vain ;
Till tears did please my woes to ease,
And I dissolved to rain.’

Don't laugh, Gabrielle—indeed I am in earnest. You don't know how I shall miss you.”

“ And I shall miss you, Cissy ; very much. We must write to one another very often. I shall try to keep a journal of all that we do, and send it to you every week.”

“ Oh, I daresay, yes. Well I know what the journal will be !—‘ Pau. December the 15th. James rose early, and read till breakfast-time. In the evening, he walked out, found the midges troublesome. Do you know of any receipt for nets to cover the

face?—Dec. 16th. James had a headache. It went off after luncheon. He said that he thought the Pyrenees very pretty. Since then, I have looked at them with increased delight.—Dec. 17th. James again surveyed the Pyrenees, and said that they were very well; but he believed, if he had only time, he could cut them into a better shape. Since then, they offend my eye; I am not sure that I should call them in good taste.—Dec. 18th. James was again worried by midges, and confounded them several times. I felt so glad that I was not a midge! Etc. Etc. James—James—James—eternally. That is the sort of journal you would make."

"You think so, do you? Wait till you see."

"I'd rather not see, if he's to fill it. What does he mean, I should like to know, by taking you away in this selfish manner, all alone? Since you must go abroad, why

shouldn't we make a party, and be jolly?"

And Cissy shook her fist.

"Oh, Cissy! do be quiet. What will Talbot say?"

"I don't care what Talbot says, or what any one says. I hate the world and everybody in it, except Mr. Godfrey. Don't look at me, Gabrielle; or I shall cry again. My eyes are turning into watering-pots—leaking ones too. I hate watering-pots, and I hate eyes, and I hate everything," cried Cissy, stamping.

"Cissy, darling, time is getting on. We shall soon be in church. I want to realize it all; do help me."

"I would if I could, dear: or if crying and realizing weren't one. Here—I'll read you something. Give me that Prayer-book."

And Cissy, steadyng her voice with some effort, read in such a manner as showed that, light though she appeared, she could,

when she chose, enter into the deepest and the gravest feelings : the Psalms for the day.

Soon—too soon—afterwards, the breakfast downstairs came to an end ; and the confusion began. Cissy was summoned to don her festal robes ; Talbot appeared to dress Gabrielle. And while her fingers worked, Talbot talked ; told how the village was turned topsy-turvy ; how people were already flocking, in their Sunday clothes, to the church ; how flags were everywhere flying, arches everywhere erected ; and, last not least, how a committee of ladies had been instituted, to devize and to execute various projects of a complimentary nature. Talbot understood that a dozen schoolgirls had been chosen, to stand at the entrance of the porch and strew flowers before the bride and bridegroom, as they left the church. Talbot had heard—in confidence—that the ladies had provided exotics. No-

body thought anything too good for Mr. Gordon or his wife. He was set wonderful store by, was Mr. Gordon.

Presently Olivia re-entered ; then Cissy ; then Mrs. Barber's voice at the door, said, "Might I be permitted?" The room began to fill, and Gabrielle to grow excited ; her eyes brightened, her cheeks burned. She was ready now ; she stood in her bridal dress : the usual white silk, with a plain tulle veil reaching almost to her feet, and the wreath of fragrant orange blossoms encircling her soft brown hair.

"Now, ma'am," said Talbot, adjusting the mirror : "Look!"

Gabrielle did look ; and a thrill of happiness, alinost of rapture, darted through her mind. For the first time, under this new aspect, she saw in the face and form which met her eye, something not utterly unworthy to be matched even with his.

After this, all—so it seemed to her—was confusion and bewilderment. Presently, she found herself being driven across the park, Olivia by her side, and Mr. Lascelles opposite. The day had brightened; the sun was shining through the window. Now the carriage had stopped at the lych gate. Mr. Lascelles was conducting her, under a succession of arches, down the long path—all carpeted—that led to the church. And before, behind, everywhere, were faces: eager, curious, interested faces. Gabrielle was conscious of a hum of voices, of whispered comments; she was glad to take refuge in the friendly shade of the porch. Here the bridesmaids were waiting; and a pause of some minutes followed, while the procession formed. Then some one—Mr. Lascelles, she fancied—asked if she were ready: she returned a mechanical yes, and, immediately, the church doors were thrown

open—the organ pealed into sudden melody—and the choir, so perfectly in unison as to give the idea of one grand angelic voice, began the marriage hymn.

“ The voice that breathed o'er Eden,
That earliest wedding day,
The primal marriage blessing,
It hath not passed away.”

The next moment, Mr. Lascelles was leading her down the nave. Green leaves and flowers everywhere; the pews and the side aisles one living mass of men, women, children: far on, a smaller band, a few figures standing together. She tried to distinguish James; but all seemed hazy: her eyes failed; it was like a dream.

“ Be present, awful Father,
To give away this bride,”

sang the choir. At that instant, Gabrielle found herself standing before the Communion rails, by James's side. There was a white rose in his button-hole; she thought

of the scene in the conservatory ; then wondered how she could have thought of such a scene, at such a time ! Then, as they still stood, waiting for the conclusion of the hymn, she ventured one upward glance into his face. And somehow, with this, the dreamy feeling fled, the mist passed from her eyes, composure returned.

“Till to the Home of gladness,
With Christ's own Bride they rise.”

So the strain ended. The last solemn Amen rang out, and died away. The echoes faded from the aisles, from the roof. The service began.

A little—just at first—Gabrielle trembled. Her “I will” was scarcely audible, here :—above, where the heart makes the voice, it sounded, doubtless, clear and bold. But afterwards : when her hand was clasped in James's hand, and he was telling her that he took her to his wedded wife, to have and to

hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death them did part: she gathered courage. For it seemed to her that they stood alone, he and she—in some bright world, all light and joy: alone, save that God was with them, binding them in one. And when her turn came, her voice no longer faltered. An old woman in a distant pew, was heard to ejaculate: “Bless her heart! but shoo means what shoo ses!”

It was over; the knot was tied: James and Gabrielle were husband and wife. Euphrosyne Pembroke watched their faces, as they came out of the vestry; and felt that her mother was right, that this wedding had taught her a lesson. It had taught her that real love—which Lady Louisa's sickly counterfeit had hitherto inclined her to despise—is a solid and a sacred thing: solid as the

counterfeit is hollow, sacred as the counterfeit is contemptible.

Many an eye was turned in deep interest towards the pair : he so tall, so handsome, so distinguished looking—she so slight, so fair, so graceful ; both so young. No sooner had they reached the door, than out crashed the bells again : while a cheer worthy of Yorkshire, burst from the church-yard. And before them fell, like a shower, the beautiful rare flowers which the Committee of Ladies had purchased—myrtles, orange flowers, oleanders, ipomeas : the little school-girls smiling and glowing, and scattering with lavish hands. The sun, bright at first, was still brighter now. It beamed in Gabrielle's face ; it irradiated James's dark eyes. Thus amid bells, cheerings, flowers, and sunshine, the husband and wife made their first entrance into the outer world.

The carriage, with true bridal show : gray horses, postillions, favours, white-gloved servants : was in waiting at the gate. Another moment, and Gabrielle was seated within. James followed ; the door was shut. Yet another—he had caught her in his arms, with a passionate exclamation.

“ Oh Gabrielle—my darling—this moment—I have pictured it so often, scarcely daring to expect it : and now it is come ! Are you happy too, Gabrielle ? Are you glad ? ”

“ It is like Heaven,” murmured Gabrielle. He paused, looking down on her. Then ; his tone deepening :—

“ May God bless my own wife”—he said ; “ and in her, her husband : for Ever ! ”

And Gabrielle answered, “ Amen.”

* * * * *

“ James ! ” said Cissy, solemnly, as, in the interval before the breakfast, he was stand-

ing behind Gabrielle's chair : "James! since this 'sweet girl' has no mother to see after her, I feel it my duty to supply that mother's place: and to warn you of the extreme responsibility of the charge which you have undertaken. Gabrielle has been delicately nurtured ; she has been guarded as one guards a precious gem.—This is the correct rendering, Olivia, isn't it?—She has now 'flopped her young affections' upon you. Prove yourself worthy of them. Take care of her. I appeal to your sense of honour."

"That is hardly necessary, I hope, Cissy. Thank you all the same, though."

"Never mind whether it was necessary or not. My soul is delivered. Gabrielle, I wash my hands of you, from this time forward. Well, Mrs. Barber! how did you like the wedding? I thought—though, being part of it myself, I ought not to say so—that it was a very pretty wedding."

"A prettier I never witnessed!" said Mrs. Barber, with emphasis: "And lor' me, Gabrielle! how well you behaved! I thought you'd faint, or cry, or something—sure to. But not one blessed tear did you shed."

"So much the better," said Cissy: "I always feel inclined to ask those crying brides, why they do it, then? As for their husbands—if I saw a wife of mine weeping her eyes out, all the time that I was swearing to make her happy, I should—don't be shocked, Olivia—box her ears."

"Lor' me, Miss Cissy! I'm thankful that Mr. Barber was not of your opinion. Good gracious! what floods I shed at my wedding, to be sure! And my mother! I verily believe that, between us, we might have filled the font. Well, 'ow do you do, Mr. Godfrey? Overworking, I'm afraid. You look just as you did when you were growing."

"Oh, I'm all right, thanks," said Charlie, hastily: "Gordon, I—I wish you joy." Then, regardless of observers, he turned to Gabrielle, and, bending towards her, wrung her hand.

"God bless you, Gabrielle," he murmured, holding it fast: "May you be as happy as I should have been, if—if—"

He paused; for his self-command was gone. She started from her chair.

"Come here—to this window. Charlie, you don't know how sorry I am to leave you. Please, please don't look like that. It grieves me so."

"Why, Gabrielle, you are crying! I should have thought that you would be too happy to care how I looked—now."

"Oh, Charlie! am I quite so selfish? Besides, how could I ever cease to care for you? I shall think of you every day, and hope that you are happy—happier."

Her eyes met his so wistfully, through their veil of tears, that Charlie's conscience smote him. He made a mighty effort, smiled, and spoke in a cheerful tone.

"Oh, I shall be happy enough, no doubt. When you come back, you'll find me working away like bricks. Work's awfully good for a fellow."

"Yes, that is your creed, I know; I hope that you will find it a true one. Only don't work too hard. And, Charlie—forgive me, I don't want to pry into your secrets, but—if you have any—any trouble, please remember the other creed, which you instilled into me; that all will come right in the end, for those who are patient, and do their duty. I know—I feel sure—that all will come right for you, Charlie."

"Thank you, my dear Gabrielle," he said, gratefully: and was about to say more, when James, stepping forward, proffered his

arm to take her in to breakfast. She was borne from poor Charlie's sight ; he turned away, sick at heart : henceforth, the day would be a blank to him. The day? life, rather. So he believed.

The breakfast passed off as pass the generality of such breakfasts. At length, arrived the end : and the carriage. Gabrielle, having previously retired upstairs, returned, dressed for the journey. People crowded round her ; Charlie—the crisis of his trial—had to “clasp her hand and part;” Mr. Morris bestowed on her a gusty benediction ; the shy girls pressed forward to kiss her. Then, followed by James—his usual composure somewhat abated by the farewell scene with Olivia—she stepped into the carriage ; and away started the horses, at what Jeffries considered a wedding pace : amid a volley of old shoes. And throughout the park, were arches, and

cheers, and crowds: among whom ever and anon, an eager voice cried, “God bless yer, Mester Gordon;” or “God give yer yer health, missis, for t’ squoire’s sake!” While at every door, and every window, all down the village, was a face—at some many a face: of “the sick and the halt,” the little children and the aged people, too feeble to walk to the park. From each, as the carriage passed, came a cheer—more or less powerful.

“How fond they are of you!” said Gabrielle: “And how guilty I feel!”

“Guilty, my child! Why?”

“For taking you away. Not from them only—from poor Olivia—turning her and Cissy out of Farnley—”

“And adding a fresh joy to my life, every time I look at you, every time you speak. But you are so pale, and so tired! Shall I tell you what I mean to do, the first thing to-morrow?”

"What?"

"To take you to Dr. W——, and make him give me a set of rules for your life abroad: your diet, as he will call it—medicines—hours—and all the rest."

"He will think you very absurd."

"Never mind. Think what he may, I shall get the rules; and you shall keep them. For remember—you have sworn to obey me——"

"But not Dr. W——"

"Dr. W——'s word will be my law. However, I don't care to be too strict, to begin with: we'll make a bargain. If you will promise to obey these rules throughout the winter, I will promise to take you in the spring, to see Venice, Naples, Rome—and anything else you like. What do you say?"

"You may be sure that I should never say No, James, when Yes would get me to Venice!"

CHAPTER VI.

Here you may see Benedick the married man.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

IT was a hot afternoon, towards the end of May. The London streets were all glare and dust. The foot-passengers traversed them with inflamed faces, and continual complaints ; in the carriages, the ladies looked languid, the coachmen apoplectic : the horses weary of their existence, and of the flies. In short, the world was dead-beat. Only Cissy was still cool, and fresh, and blooming.

“Olivia, Olivia!” she cried, entering the drawing-room—the drawing-room of Sir Philip Peers’s house in Berkeley Square,

where she and her sister were staying :
“ Olivia, the most delicious, delightful, enchanting, superb, charming, hightiest-tightiest-gollopciousest news in the world ! To be had on guessing.”

And Cissy, her hands folded at her back, performed the Strathspey in front of Olivia’s chair.

“ My dear Cissy, pray keep still. How can you jump about, in this weather ?”

“ Olivia, have you any quicksilver in your composition ? I wish I might dissect you and see. I’m sure I could put you together again ; and I do so want to know. And—‘ jump about,’ indeed ! Jumping about is highly unladylike. I’m not jumping, I’m dancing a Scotch reel. So will you be, I believe, in another minute.”

“ By-the-by, it is just post-time.. Have you heard from James ? Yes, I see a letter in your hand. What does it say ?”

"Suppose it says secrets—?" began Cissy : but, catching sight of Olivia's imploring countenance, she relented ; tossing into her lap a foreign envelope.

"There, that's for you : from your beloved James. It came enclosed in this for me : from my beloved Gabrielle ! which, by-the by, I haven't read yet. I just took it out of the cover, caught sight of this enchanting news —and everything else went out of my head."

"But what is the news, Cissy ? Read the letter aloud."

"You have not opened your own."

"Never mind. I would just as soon hear the other first, and I know you are longing to read it."

"You dear unselfish old darling ! Listen, then :" and Cissy began.

"Cologne, May 18th, 18—

"MY DEAREST CISSY,

"Please forgive my silence. I fear I am

really very negligent about my letters ; and the days fly by so quickly, and so busily—if I may call sight-seeing business—that I lose my count of time ; and a week is gone before I have fairly realized that it is begun. I think we shall stay here some few nights longer ; for there is a good deal in and about the place, that James wants to shew me ; so we mean to brave out the odours, and do it all thoroughly. And now I must tell you of our plans ; which are at length finally fixed. We expect to be in England by the 3rd or 4th, and our first destination is London : rather—I will privately confess to you—against my will ; for I am tired of bustle, and afraid lest all this dissipation should spoil me for our quiet country life. However, James has set his heart on having me presented, and on making me *au fait* of a London season ; so I keep my objections to myself. Only I have made him promise to take me

home directly after the drawing-room ; and then—very soon—we want you and dear Olivia to come to us for a good long visit. Oh, how delightful it will be ! you can't think how I am looking forward to it. Tell Olivia that she must say yes, or James will be angry, and I shall be miserable ; not a very pleasant opening to our Farnley married life ! I am longing to see you both ; and I have so much to tell. I am sure that, when I once begin, I shall never stop talking. James (who is just come to look over me) begs to say that he is sure of the same ; and glad equally, as it will save him a great deal of trouble.

“ You ask me how I am. Thank God, I am quite well. James still takes the most absurd care of me :—though I should not say ‘ absurd,’ for I do really think that his care at Pau saved my life. He is so very strict about draughts, fatigue, etc., and I am almost

fat, and so hardy! I believe I could not catch cold, if I tried. He is most munificent to me, as regards pocket-money, and I have got all manner of pretty things for presents. However, I won't anticipate ; you will see them soon.

“ Yesterday, in the cool of the evening, we walked to a little village, on the other side of the river. Everything was lovely—the sky cloudless—scarcely a breath of air stirring. We found a pleasant little nook on the bank, and sat down. Before us lay Cologne, with its steeples, its pinnacles, and strange, foreign-looking roofs, and the half-finished tower of the cathedral. And the murmur of it, etherealized and softened, came to us over the water ; and behind us, in an inn-garden, a band was playing ‘ Wenn die Schwalben ;’ and presently, the glow that comes before sunset, began to steal over the landscape, and we saw all things

through a medium of golden light. And the band ceased to play, but we heard the bells of some church on the opposite bank : which suited the scene still better. The very atmosphere seemed full of poetry and inspiration. If I were a poet, Cissy, or an artist, I should then have conceived something great ! but I am neither, and my heart felt ready to burst, for want of the power to express itself. When the sun had set, we walked slowly home, over the bridge of boats. I was very tired ; but oh, such an evening was worth a life of tiredness ! At least, so it seemed at the time.

“ To-day is rainy, and I cannot get out ; but James is going off to the Rathhaus again, and his dear archives—he has made some very valuable notes. We are engaged to the Von Wieschels for this evening. It is the daughter’s birthday ; and we shall meet hosts of people. I am looking for-

ward to it—all will be so new: and then I love going out with James. He is made so much of! and he looks so gentlemanlike and handsome, that he does credit to the English nation."

(“I daresay! Much you care about the English nation! You are the essence of patriotism, aren’t you? Why else did you marry James?”)

“And now, dear Cissy, I must bring this scribble to a close. James says that so much stooping is bad for my chest, and that he won’t leave the house until he has seen my desk put away; and I know he is longing to be at the Rathhaus. I shall be so very glad to see you—I can’t help writing that once more. These last six months have been all holiday: too bright for this work-a-day world. I only hope that you may not find me very selfish and idle, in consequence. The poor people at Farnley

weigh on my mind. I feel so inexperienced —and so anxious that they should suffer as little as possible from the change of squires. Tell Olivia that I shall want a great, great deal of advice.

“With much love, I am ever
“Your affectionate sister,
“GABRIELLE GORDON.”

“Now I would have kept the creature half-an-hour—upset my desk, and the ink, and all kinds of things: tormenting tyrant! If I might not write, he should not go to his Rathouse—or whatever it may be. But I always knew that Gabrielle would spoil him: she's so provokingly meek. Don't shake your head, Olivia! isn't it too delightful?—their coming home, I mean. Then the Farnley visit! I can hardly believe it!”

And Cissy inflicted several impetuous hugs —first upon her sister, and afterwards upon

Gipsy: who stood beside her, wagging his tail, and looking to the last degree sympathetic.

The last few months, to Gabrielle so bright, had been far from bright to Cissy. She had made the best of everything; trying, so far as in her lay, to be a comfort to Olivia: but there had latterly been many a moment when some comfort on her own account, would not have been ill-bestowed. In the first place, she had sorely missed Gabrielle. It was not perhaps, at this time, in Cissy's power to love more than a very few persons at once. But those few she loved heartily; and, capricious as she often showed herself, constantly. Among them, Gabrielle ranked high; and after Gabrielle was gone, Cissy wrote in her journal—for she kept a journal, by fits and starts—that she was, like Mrs. Gummidge, a lone, lorn creetur, and everythink might henceforth be expected to go contrary with her.

Which assertions, considered in their essence, did verily, just then, express the prevailing state of Cissy's mind.

Not the least among her trials, was the necessity of leaving Farnley. For although, remembering Olivia's greater loss, she said but little of her own, a trial most grievous she did in fact find this necessity to be. She was not only strongly attached to the place, and to everything about it ; but the county, her native Yorkshire, appeared to her the only county in which she could ever feel herself at home. She took with her the wild pony and Gipsy ; and her brother-in-law's park at Enderby was almost as extensive, and quite as secluded, as that at Farnley : she might still, therefore, roam or ride, according to her fancy. This was consoling ; yet the sore pangs of the *heimweh* were often sorely felt by Cissy, at Brierley Lodge.

Olivia, when once the wrench was over, began to revive. She was devoted to Annie, a great favourite with Sir Philip, and she found in the children objects of ceaseless interest. Moreover, her mind, by nature calm, had, through long years of self-discipline, learned the art of reducing its expectations, its desires even, to the level of the circumstances in which she happened to be placed. But Cissy was young ; and her discipline was yet, for the most part, to come ; indeed, these, her first real experiences in the changes and chances of this mortal life, were probably its beginning. Then Cissy and Annie, although sisters, had little, save affection, in common ; and she thought Sir Philip weak ; and the children were too proper and too well-behaved to suit her taste : so, as Olivia brightened, she pined.

Such being the case, it was not surprising that the tidings contained in Gabrielle's let-

ter filled her with delight. As to the day when the travellers arrived in England, and she went with Olivia to meet them, at James's town house in Portman Place : of Cissy's delight then, we need not speak.

James had brought his wife home, well, and comparatively strong. Of the terrible consumptive heritage, no outward token was left. The fairness was now a healthy fairness ; the slightness was slightness, and not thinness. She still looked delicate, still fragile : but no more.

And happiness suited her face. It was a sweeter face than ever. Gazing into her eyes was like gazing into calm depths of light ; her lips, always mobile, seemed, at this time, ever ready to part in smiles. The pale, drooping little maiden of a few months back, might hardly be recognized in this bright young wife : one glance at whom was sufficient to prove that joy is a reality.

" You are not a bit matronly," said Cissy: " You are come back just the same insignificant little slip of a girl, that you went away."

" Am I ? Well, it is something to be considered a girl, even ! James is always calling me his ' child.' "

" What impudence ! But that's a young man all over. Young men take such liberties. If I ever marry anybody—which I doubt—it shall be a Methusaleh. And then he'll have a hoary head. I should delight in a hoary-headed husband."

" You'd better advertize for one," said Gabrielle, laughing: " But, seriously, I could not bear to marry an old man. He would die so soon, you know."

" So much the better—I mean, the better for my constancy. Three, or, at most, four, years of matrimony, would be quite enough for me. With great effort, I might stand five: but six—never ! Now two young peo-

ple together—you and James, for instance: you may have sixty or seventy years before you yet!"

"Sixty or seventy thousand would be none too many," said Gabrielle, with a little sigh.

"But, my dear! you can't have considered the matter. Seventy years; think what they are! Seventy times three hundred and sixty-five breakfasts, luncheons, dinners: always the same face opposite, always the same voice talking. It would kill me, Gabrielle. I'm certain of that. And time it should, too—since, I suppose, before I came to it, I should be approaching a hundred."

"My dear Cissy, what an Irish sentence!"

"I must have caught it of Mrs. O'Tallaghan, when she called this afternoon. But why am I wasting my time like this, when I have so much to ask you and to tell you? And, first and foremost, were you

not glad to find yourself getting better?"

"More than glad: most deeply thankful. Oh, Cissy, I can't tell you what it was to feel my strength returning, and the pain in my side passing off. And then, when my cough began to go, and the constant dread, the shadow of death, abated—oh, that was true joy. And yet—"

"Well, dear?"

"Yet, I could not help reproaching myself, and thinking of that—'Willing rather to be absent from the body, and—' You know the rest, Cissy."

"My dear scrupulous child, Saint Paul said it; and you are not a saint—yet: though next door to one, I believe you are," muttered Cissy, in a parenthesis: "It would have been most unnatural for you to wish to die just then, to leave James almost in your honeymoon, and so on."

"Perhaps—" said Gabrielle, wistfully: "I

hardly know. He was as bad. Those weeks when I was so delicate—he would not let me speak of death."

"No wonder, I'm sure," cried Cissy, with a shudder.

"It would be less painful, now, I think ; at least, to me. Now, somehow, I feel more satisfied, more closely bound to him ; too closely indeed to be ever parted, really —even so. But, then, we had hardly had time to settle into our new position ; our happiness seemed scarcely begun. I felt as though I could not, could not, leave him. And at last, Cissy, one day——"

"Go on, darling."

"You won't care for it."

"Never mind. Go on."

"One afternoon, at Pau, my heart was so full—it seemed too much to bear alone ; and I might not speak of it to him ; I had no one human to tell. So I went to my room, and

locked the door, and knelt down, and poured out everything: just as—if he had let me—I should have poured out everything to James."

" You prayed, you mean?"

" No. It was not praying. I had prayed before. I had asked for life, and for resignation, and all that—many a time. But now I asked nothing; I only told it. Some wonderful Spiritual Presence seemed to come near me, to enfold me; and I thought—' He is my Creator, and He will understand.' So I just let the words flow out—and opened all my mind. My great love for my husband, and my fear lest it might be too great, and that I longed to feel rightly about death, and yet could not; all this, and more. And gradually, peace came: how, I can't describe, but in some wonderful, divine way. There was breathed into my soul a conviction, that eventually all would be right; that my love

would be brought into its proper place, my desires subdued—everything as it ought to be. And then I knelt on, saying nothing, thinking nothing: only, as it were, reposing. Until James came to the door, and called me, and I went to him; and he said that I looked tired, and that he would read me to sleep. Well, I slept a long time, so happily, with my head upon his shoulder; and when I awoke, my doubts and fears were gone. And, Cissy, they have never come back; that peace has never faded."

"Gabrielle, you go too deep for me. I cannot enter into these abstractions. I can hardly understand them, even. Am I very wicked?"

"Not wicked, Cissy. Natures differ, you know."

"Yes, that's true. Besides, I am Undine. My soul is yet to be found. It won't jump suddenly upon me, I fancy; it will grow by

degrees. And I have some idea—though I can't be sure—that a bit of it has grown already."

"What gives you the idea?" said Gabrielle, laughing.

"Oh, nothing very definite. It is only that, lately, a change has come o'er the spirit of my dream. Not a pleasant change; my views of life are not brighter. But, somehow, I think they are deeper. Only a 'teeny, tiny' bit deeper, you know. Still —such as it is—I suspect that the soul, coming late, like one's wise teeth, might be at the bottom of it."

"But, now I look at you, I believe—— You are not unhappy, dearest Cissy?"

"Just at this moment, my darling, I am on the top of the topmost pinnacle of the Castle of Delight. I have been climbing up to it, ever since I heard that you were coming home; and now here I am. And

very agreeable it is: only rather dizzy."

"But you have not been happy, I can see. I thought you liked Brierley Lodge, Cissy."

"Like it? Yes. You like Mrs. Edgecumbe, don't you?"

"I am very sorry," said Gabrielle, looking downcast: "I was afraid it would be so. If we could only all live at Farnley together——!"

"My dearest, we can't. Instead of wishing for impossible things, let us enjoy ourselves, and make the best of things as they are. You needn't look so guilty. I do believe that you consider yourself a hardened miscreant: just because James happened to marry you—which delighted us all, by-the-by. Brothers always do marry; and sisters, in our circumstances, always do have to turn out. 'Tis the course of nature, my dear. And I am sure I feel myself heartily thankful that we are turned out

for you, instead of for anybody else. . That Definite Article, now! The bare idea is dreadful."

"James," exclaimed Cissy, next day, "what a naughty, wicked, extravagant little monkey that Gabrielle of yours is! She has brought us all such beautiful presents. In fact, she seems to have come home in a giving frenzy. I suppose she caught it of you?"

"Of me! How?" said James.

"Why, I've just been looking at her things; and, lor me!—as Mrs. Barber would say—they all appear to be donations: and you the donor. No wonder she knocks-under, and acts the model wife! She's sharp, and she sees what she'll get by it. Now, if I were you, James, I'd vary my system: accustom her to bread and water, now and then, and so forth. That's the way to discern character. Why, even I

might, occasionally, obey my husband—if I had one—supposing that he rewarded me, as you reward her. An unsafe policy, James. A bad beginning of a bad business. Misfortune comes, swallows your money,—and your hold on her is lost.”

“I’ll tell you what, Cissy: I’m thankful that she doesn’t possess your tongue! Her hold on me would be somewhat precarious, then, I fancy.”

“If she possessed my tongue, dear boy, she would possess my mind; and if she possessed my mind, she would never have married you. So there’d be no hold to lose, you see:—luckier for both parties!”

“And, to pursue the matter, if she possessed your mind, I should never have asked her to marry me; so the argument melts into nothingness. But really, Cissy, this is rather too soon to begin quarrelling. I beg your pardon; and I grant you mine: let us ‘kiss and be friends.’”

"I'll kiss you, my esteemed relative, with all the pleasure in life; and I'll be as much your friend, as I ever was. But as to pardoning and quarrelling, I ignore both. I simply and dispassionately stated certain facts. If you like to call that quarrelling, you may; I beg to differ. Thanks, James. One kiss is enough. Remember the weather."

"I am glad you are not Cissy, Gabrielle," said James, when next they were alone.

"What a strange speech, James! Has Cissy offended you?"

"Hardly that:" and he smiled,—the provoking, superior smile of old: "She is only a little too much for me. A good deal too much for me she would be, if she were my wife."

"I wonder how it is," said Gabrielle, after some minutes of abstraction, "that neither of you two seem able to appreciate the other. Now, to my mind, Cissy is charm-

ing. I have so enjoyed seeing her again."

" You enjoy everything, my sweet, sweet child."

" No, I don't, James ; and Cissy is really—but never mind. I shall do my best to make you fast friends ; as you ought to be, and as you will be, some day, I know."

" Well—perhaps ; I can't tell. I can tell one thing—that I wish we were not to be so uncommonly sociable to-night. Olivia alone would be a different matter : but all those people!"

" All those people ! Oh, you inhospitable boy ! There will be only, besides Olivia, Philip and Annie and Cissy."

" Yes, I believe I am very absurd. But the fact is, I have had you so entirely to myself, that—that——"

" Well?"

" Gabrielle, what does that little Scotch song of yours say—— ?

'I'm jealous of what blesses her,—
The summer breeze that kisses her,—
 The flowery beds
 On which she treads,—
Though wae for ane that misses her ! "

"James, you are growing silly. I must call you to order. And, to begin with—go upstairs : it is time to dress."

CHAPTER VII.

Ay, Memory has honey-cells !
And some of them are mine.

M. H.

“TO everything”—says Solomon—“there is a season ; and a time for every purpose under Heaven.” On Gabrielle’s life had now dawned a time for rejoicing—rejoicing unalloyed, perhaps, as rejoicing can be, this side the grave ; a time to love and to be loved,—without any shadow of separation, or of poverty, or of jealousy, to come between. Every hour, at this period, was a poem to her : every event, however trivial, brought something of beauty ; left an echo, as of sweet music, which lingered on.

" Our little systems have their day,
They have their day, and cease to be."

Few lives of any length, probably, transpire without an episode—it may be of years, it may be of months, more commonly of weeks or of days—an episode such as that through which Gabrielle was now passing. Fore-tastes of a brighter world, from this they quickly fade ; but behind them remains one blessing which, while reason survives, fades never. The man who prayed—" Lord, keep my memory green!"—was a wise man ; and a happy man. In days of sorrow, desolation, pain, or—sometimes more trying than either—of dry stagnation ; we may, in memory, still possess those halcyon days of old : and gather from them hope and faith for the days to come.

So, often after it had passed away, Gabrielle found solace in looking back to this first sweet part of her wedded life. And

perhaps there was no portion of it which she loved better to recall than the month or two immediately following her return from the Continent. The three weeks spent in London ; James's popularity ; the delight of going out with him, of seeing and hearing him in company with Mr. Savill and other men of literary celebrity ; her pride in their evident appreciation—admiration, rather—of his talents. The music ; the pictures ; the Crystal Palace ; the beautiful girls ; the drives in the Park ; the general gaieties : all perfectly charming to her, because all were new. Her pleasant chats with Cissy ; Olivia's kindness ; James's devotion,—she could give it no other name. Then the drawing-room, and the return to Farnley ; the first joyful consciousness of being at home ; the village welcomes and festivities. The *tête-à-tête* fortnight with James, before the arrival of his sisters ; the rides and

walks : the books which he read to her, the songs which she sang to him. The long summer evenings—especially the twilight part of them ; when he would play to her on the chapel organ—melodies grand, or sweet, or dreamy ; when they would talk—as only the young and the happy can talk—over all imaginable subjects : “things sacred, and things profane ; things past, and things to come ; things foreign, and things at home :” ever, even at the gravest, ready to branch into mirth ; never, even at the gayest, losing that undertone of thoughtfulness, which equally, although somewhat differently, characterized both their minds.

And when James was no longer a bridegroom, when that year of indulgence which he had allotted to himself, was over ; then Gabrielle, hungering and thirsting for some demonstration of his love, delighted to remember how abundant, once, such demon-

strations had been. How gentle, how tender, had been his manner ; what interest he had taken in all that interested her ; how kindly he had entered into any little fears or scruples, such as Gabrielle was prone to —sympathizing, consoling, smoothing all away : never contemptuous, never unconcerned, never bored.

Little or nothing in common, to all appearance, was there between the ardent young husband of these days, and the cold philosopher of days to come. But the one character had, at least, no power to obliterate the other. While the coldness of the latter was at its height, the former, ardent as ever, lived still in Gabrielle's heart ; and helped to keep it warm.

Charlie Godfrey was absent, on a holiday, when the young couple returned to Farnley ; but Gabrielle made many inquiries of Mr. Morris, concerning him. And she learned

that he had left Meddiscombe, not merely for a holiday, but also, by medical advice, for change of air and scene. He had been working too hard ; in the parish all day, and sitting up to read at night ; both his spirits and his health had suffered : and Dr. Wallace had announced that only two months of entire rest could save him from breaking down altogether.

Gabrielle heard these particulars with a full heart—moreover with many pangs of self-reproach : which James discerned.

“I fear”—he said, the same evening—“I fear, Gabrielle, that my suspicions about Godfrey were correct ; and I believe——”

She looked up at him.

“I believe that you fear the same.”

“I—I have feared it lately—since our wedding-day.”

“Why particularly since our wedding-day ?”

"Because, when he congratulated me, his manner . . . he said—"

"What did he say? He had no business to say anything," burst out James, a little fiercely.

"Oh James—that is not kind. He has behaved beautifully, all through, I am sure. It was only just at last, when—you know when he came to me."

Then she repeated poor Charlie's broken speech.

"Poor fellow!" said James, his fierceness melting: "I am very sorry. I pity him —on my honour, I do—from the bottom of my heart."

"And so do I," cried Gabrielle, bursting into tears: I hope—oh, James, do you think I misled him? do you think I gave him cause to—"

"No, no, my darling," he said, caressing her: "You have no reason whatever to re-

proach yourself. It is one of those unfortunate things which nobody can help. Try to forget it—the recollection will do him no good, and you harm. Try to forget it—and don't cry ; to please me, don't cry."

But Gabrielle was thinking of all that Charlie had been to her at Eversfield—even at Farnley ; how kind, dear, brotherly ; how he had comforted her in her sorrow, had striven his utmost to sympathize in her joy. And so thinking, she saw his face, clouded and pale ; saw him toiling alone at Meddiscombe : she contrasted his life as it was, with his life as he had hoped that it would be : with her own, made happy at his cost : and despite James's entreaties, the tears flowed on, more bitterly than before.

" My child," he said at last : " If you take things to heart like this, your unselfish little spirit will soon wear itself quite out ; and then what shall I do ?"

"Unselfish, James! I am anything but unselfish. Here is poor Charlie—who was always so good and kind—made miserable through me: while I—— If I had only known this sooner!"

"Sooner! What do you mean? Before you and I were married?"

"Before I ever saw you. I would have tried to like him, as—as he liked me. I would have tried my best, and I might have succeeded—if I had known."

"Thank God, then, Gabrielle, that you did not know!"

She paused, half frightened by the vehemence with which these words were uttered. He rose hastily to his feet, and stood before her: his full, majestic height.

"Gabrielle, do you mean to say that you wish—can sit deliberately there, and tell me that you wish, you had married Godfrey, instead of me?"

"Oh, James, how could I? I hardly knew, just now, what I said. I was thinking only of Charlie, and his unhappiness—"

"Go on."

"And if I had been engaged to him, or, at least, in love with him—which you would soon have seen—when I came to Farnley, you would never have thought of me. You would have married some one else, of course; and—"

"Should I never have thought of you? Why, as it was, until the last month, almost the last day, before our engagement, I was far from certain that you were not 'in love with him!' At one time, Olivia was in the habit of mentioning it to me as an established fact. Yet I loved you all the same. It was my fate to love you."

"James—don't, don't look so reproachful. Indeed, when I made that unfortunate speech, I was thinking of Charlie only. If

I had thought of you, or of myself, I never could have made it. I might have been happy with Charlie; but he could never have been to me—no one could ever be to me what——”

“ Well, Gabrielle?”

“ What you are.”

He sat down again by her side.

“ You really mean that? You love me better than you would have loved him, if he had been—your husband?”

“ James, why will you question me so?”

“ You are too cold, Gabrielle,” he said, passionately: “ You don’t satisfy me. You have never satisfied me yet. I want more—more than you have ever given me. I want you to love me as I love you.”

“ I do, James. I am sure that I do.”

“ I am sure that you do not. Could I have made such a speech to you? Could I—even if a hundred women were breaking

their hearts for me—which is more than *he* is doing, or will do, for you—could I ever, for one instant, regret that I have known you, have loved you? Never—never."

He started again to his feet, like a restless spirit.

"No," he thought: "Not even to escape the evil which I feared—nay, fear: which has indeed come upon me: not even to escape that, would I untie one thousandth part of the knot that binds us: her to me, me to her."

Then, suddenly, standing once more before her:

"Gabrielle," said he: "Do you know what I should have been, what would have become of me, if, as you have suggested, you had come to Farnley, loving him? Your marriage has been a blow to him, a disappointment; but he will get over it. I have watched him more closely than you suppose;

and I believe I have formed a tolerably accurate estimate of his affection for you. There was much of friendship, much of the brotherly element, in it; it was deep, so far as it went; but it was quiet and patient. Beside mine, it was a torch beside a fire.—Don't interrupt me, Gabrielle; I have not finished.—He is now trying hard to forget you; or rather, those vain hopes concerning you. And he will succeed. In a year or two—perhaps sooner—the brotherly element will have absorbed the rest; he will be happy again: in all probability, will marry. Whereas, I—Gabrielle, only God knows what I should have been, if you had disappointed me. I might—don't think this extravagant, I feel that I might—have made away with myself altogether. Or if not that, I should have sunk into such depths as you, in your innocence, cannot even picture. I should not have cared for anything, pre-

sent or future ; or for any one, human or divine ; or have been good for anything, in this world, or in the next : any more."

He paused, for his voice had grown husky ; and Gabrielle, with her earnest eyes, looked up into his face : half shuddering—sensible as never before, of the awful responsibility of this love : this wonderful, passionate love, which, without her seeking, had come to her. This man, whom she knew to be so talented ; whom she believed to be so superior : he, it seemed, was dependent upon her, for happiness—almost for virtue ! He stood there, so tall, so powerful-looking ; and owned that dependence.

"James," she said—"it is terrible."

"What is terrible ?"

"Your love for me. How can I ever—"

But there she stopped. A recollection suddenly struck her : a promise spoken long ago, but still, as then, true and sure.

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

And, in that moment, strength came.

She rose, laid her hand upon his arm, and said, her tone very low and gentle : "James, do sit down by me, and be calm. I did not mean to rouse such a storm in you."

"It was a simple statement of facts, Gabrielle. And 'calm!' While you are so calm yourself, I cannot be calm. Your calmness maddens me."

She looked up at him once more ; then, suddenly, throwing her arms all round him, clasped him tight.

"James"—she murmured,—"My own husband—my dearest, next to God—"

He was softened ; he sat down, drawing her with him.

"I can't shew my love as you show yours, James—so passionately, almost wildly ; it is not in my nature. But if you could see my heart, you would be satisfied—more than

satisfied. And some day, James, when all may not be so bright with us as now ; when an opportunity may come to me of bearing something for you, of doing something for you, of giving up something for you ; then, perhaps, you will see—and believe. For, James, I feel that I could bear, I could give up, I could do anything, everything, for you : every day, and every hour of the day, if it were needed."

She raised her arms to his neck, and drew down his face, and covered it with kisses ; and as she did so—somewhat to her astonishment—a hot tear fell upon her forehead.

" My blessed child—" he said, hoarsely : " I am not worthy of thee—nor of thy pure love."

It was many a long day since he had spoken a truer word !

* * * * *

One morning, about this time—an ideal

August morning, still and sultry—Gabrielle, armed with a hat, a parasol, and a volume of “Friends in Council,” had sallied forth alone into the garden: and finding a shady spot, at the foot of an old cedar, had seated herself on the grass, prepared for an hour’s diligent reading. Half that hour had elapsed; she was deep in her book: when a sudden cough in her vicinity made her start, and look hastily up. Before her, in a deferential attitude, stood a gentleman—a stranger; he had evidently entered the garden from the house, crossing the lawn unheard. Her colour considerably heightened, she rose to her feet; whereupon the gentleman bowed: and said—in an accent which at once established his title to the name—

“Mrs. Gordon, I presume?”

Gabrielle returned the bow.

“I fear I have disturbed you—” glancing

at the book: "I beg sincerely to apologize. The fault lies with your husband: from whom I come, charged with permission to introduce myself to you; and further, with a message requesting you to bear the infliction of my company for a little while. The fact is, I rode over to see him on business—we are old acquaintances, by the way—but a previous engagement with his steward prevents his seeing me till after luncheon: to which he has done me the honour of inviting me, provided—" another bow—"provided that you do not object."

Gabrielle, a little puzzled, smiled and blushed, and said something about being very happy: calling forth a third bow, lower and more obsequious than the rest. Fortunately for her, she was all unconscious of the scrutiny which was going on beneath this deferential exterior.

"I think, if you'll allow me, I'll sit down.

The heat is something stupendous." And, having first paused for Gabrielle to resume her own seat, he installed himself at her side. She thought him somewhat cool ; but since he was undoubtedly a gentleman, and sent to her by James, she prepared, as best she could, to entertain him.

" All this time I have not the honour of knowing your name," said she.

" No, by-the-by ! What unpardonable negligence on my part ! That reminds me —in a certain work, entitled ' Say and Seal ' —have you read it ?"

" I have seen it, I believe."

" Well, the hero of that work,—albeit a model of all perfection—on making his first appearance, forgets, like me, to give himself a name. So his worthy hostess, after conversing with him for upwards of an hour, leaves the room, and sends in the servant, with her compliments, and she should be

glad to know who he is?—You look as if you doubted my veracity, Miss Gordon; but I assure you this is a fact. I heard my sister-in-law read the whole scene to my wife, one day, when some unlucky accident—a rent in my glove—detained me for its reparation, in the drawing-room. By-the-by, the very glove, and the very rent!" And the unknown contemplated his hand: while Gabrielle eyed him curiously.

"He hasn't told me his name, after all," she thought: "And I don't like to ask again. I suppose I must wait till James comes."

"You were deeply engrossed when I crossed the lawn, I saw. Might I be allowed——?"—and he took in his hand the book which lay on the grass: "'Friends in Council!' Mrs. Gordon, I congratulate you." Then, as Gabrielle stared—"On your superior taste, I mean. It is not often that

one sees so young a lady so much interested in a work of this kind. In the present day, the rage for light, or rather, frothy, reading, is terrible; especially among gir—young women. I must apologize"—another bow—"for using the term 'women.' It is meant to include all classes."

"I cannot judge," said Gabrielle, "of any class except my own. But as concerns them, I am sure that great injustice is often done, by regarding their occupations in society, as criterions of their tastes. Who would bring a book that requires much thought and attention into a drawing-room full of people, most of whom are laughing and talking, and doing their best to put thought of any kind out of the question?"

"You mean that young ladies usually reserve their solid books for their bedrooms,—or their gardens? Well! the conclusion is charitable; and in one instance, at least,

true : " He held up " Friends in Council."

" Ah, 'that was just as it happened. If you had come in the afternoon, I daresay I should have been reading a novel."

" 'Aurora Floyd'—or one of her crew?"

" Well—no—perhaps not. But 'I am very fond of novels, in a general way; only I don't read them in the morning. Good novels I mean, you know: those that seem like a bit out of real life."

" And 'Aurora Floyd,' then, does not come under that description? Or perhaps your partiality for real life does not extend beyond its sunny side: you abjure its horrors."

" Horrors of that sort,—all crime and misery? I would rather never know that such things exist."

" But since they do exist——"

" Yes?"

" Is there not something of sickliness, of sentimentality, in closing your eyes to them?"

"I suppose there would be," said Gabrielle, "if, by opening my eyes, I could do any good. But as it is, they might corrupt me, while I should have no power to purify them."

"Corrupt you? Would that be possible?"

"Why not?" said Gabrielle, laughing.

He felt himself silenced.

"Ha!" he said presently, turning over the leaves of "Friends in Council:" "I see you follow that good custom of marking one's pet bits. At least, I suppose this is your mark?—

"What are possessions? To an individual, the stores of his own heart and mind pre-eminently"

"Yes," said Gabrielle: "I did mark that. It is a very favourite passage of mine."

"Singular," he said meditatively: "Now I could imagine a poor, or a misanthropical, person, sitting down and double-scoring

such sentiments as these. But you"—he waved his hand towards the house, the gardens that surrounded it, the park and woods, stretching far into the distance : " You—so rich in material possessions—no sour grapes throughout your whole domain ! Yes, certainly : it is singular.

" And here, too—further on—is another mark :

" 'What then are a Nation's possessions ? The great words that have been said in it ; the great deeds that have been done in it ; the great buildings, the great works of art that have been made in it.'

" How is this, Mrs. Gordon ? pray explain the phenomenon. Do you indeed regard these good things of yours with indifference, as of no true value ?"

(" Now, if she's a fool or a humbug, she'll swear she does !")

Gabrielle pondered a moment, looking

down. At any rate, he thought, her face was not foolish!—or humbugging either.

"No," said she, suddenly, raising her eyes: "I regard them as blessings—in their way, great blessings; and I enjoy them. I think it is difficult not to enjoy them too much. But at the same time, they seem to me less in the light of possessions than of loans; because death must take them away."

"And those other possessions, you think, death cannot take?—the stores of your own heart and mind."

"Those? Oh no. While the soul lives, they must live, for ever."

"A very pleasant creed, Mrs. Gordon. May it prove a true one! And by the way, according to that, your husband will be a millionaire in the next world. What a mind he has, to be sure! He is a true genius."

"Do you think so?" cried Gabrielle, delighted.

"Ah!" thought her companion; "Here, at least, lies a vulnerable point!"

"Who would not think so? Look at his 'Four Essays.' That book is a prodigy of wisdom. In profundity of thought, it is matchless; in——"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Gabrielle, with a half smile—"but let me remind you, that praise exaggerated is no praise."

"Mrs. Gordon, you astonish me. Exaggerated! Surely, for such an author, for such a book, no praise can be too great."

"The author and the book themselves, would tell you differently," said Gabrielle.

"And—forgive me, this is more to the point: what would *you* tell me?"

"Why, in the first place—if, with that assertion about 'a prodigy of wisdom,' you had coupled some such saving clause as 'the

age of the writer considered,' or so forth : I should feel it to be a much higher, because a much truer compliment. And in the second place, as respects the 'matchless profundity of thought'—I suppose I am mistaken, then, in fancying that I have heard of a certain person called Francis Bacon, or of another called John Locke, or of another called Joseph Butler, or of another called Isaac Newton, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera."

"Mrs. Gordon, you are too severe."

"I think not. It is only love of truth," said Gabrielle, laughing: "Next time you pay compliments, let me advize you to choose your terms with more care."

"Well, at least you will allow me—speaking of your husband as my friend, which does me honour—to say I regard him as the most talented man whom I know."

"That sounds more likely to be true," replied Gabrielle, with shining eyes.

"It is true. You need not be afraid ; I shall exaggerate no more, in your presence ! And, by the way, esteeming Gordon as I do, I should be really thankful, if you would use your influence to persuade him to enter Parliament. It is a downright shame that talents like his should blush unseen in private life. He has 'the gift of the gab ;' great clearness of judgment ; every advantage of position, wealth, and influence : in short, it would be difficult to say what he has not, that might facilitate the winning of a name. Now for such a man to bury himself in the wilds of Yorkshire,—hidden—unnoticed—"

"He may be hidden ; whether he will be unnoticed, remains to be proved," said Gabrielle, thinking of the great book.

"He will write, you mean ? But then—what slow work writing is ! Carving his name with toil and difficulty, in a block of

marble, while at his feet lies a trumpet, by means of which he might proclaim that name, far and wide."

"The echoes of the trumpet would soon die," said Gabrielle; "the marble would remain."

"And you are contented, then—it is, perhaps, by your advice, that his powers are thus wasted? Oh, Mrs. Gordon!"

"I should not presume to advize him," said Gabrielle, the light returning to her eyes: "But I confess I am quite contented that he should pursue the path which he has marked out for himself—and which, I believe, will at length lead him to a height far beyond that of which you speak. He is young, and his talents need cultivation; he wants time, to study and to think."

"*Parlez du soleil, et vous en verrez les rayons!*" the stranger suddenly exclaimed;

and Gabrielle, looking up, espied her husband at the other end of the lawn.

"By the by, that reminds me—" another low bow: "What arrant negligence! I verily believe that I have never responded to the honour Mrs. Gordon did me, in inquiring my name."

"No," said Gabrielle, quietly.

"I beg ten thousand pardons. But 'better late than never.' My name is Raynton: George Peter Raynton, at your service. Your husband and I, as he may have informed you, were fast friends in 'auld lang syne.'"

This latter sentence Gabrielle did not hear. The bare name of Raynton had sufficed to bury her in confusion. The anonymous introduction, the examinatory character of the conversation—she understood both! Her husband must have planned this interview. Throughout it, she had been, unconsciously,

shown, and showing, off! "Oh! horrible! horrible! most horrible!"

"Raynton, we may as well make a clean breast of it," said James, approaching, and seeing the state of things at a glance.

"I have no objection in the world," returned Raynton, with a sardonic gesture.

"Well, then, Gabrielle, to tell you the truth, this fellow here is somewhat addicted to whims: one of which, a few days ago, took the form of a desire to make your acquaintance *incog.* At first, I demurred; but at last I yielded: the sequel you know. And now can you forgive me?"

"And me,—the arch-offender?"

Gabrielle was compelled to assent; and to swallow her vexation as best she might.

"By George, Gordon," said the visitor, as soon as they were alone, "you are a lucky fellow! That wife of yours is a little gem; how you came upon her, I can't imagine.

If I were not already blessed in that way, I should certainly apply for your recipe."

"You approve of her, then?" said James —actually flushing with delight.

"To make a confession, I don't know that I was ever more taken, at first sight, with any woman: always excepting my own highly-esteemed better half. Yes—so far, I do approve of her."

"And yet she is no beauty," said James, smiling.

"Not critically: but the sweetest face—However, Gordon, I advise you to look out lest she should be spoiled. Women are made of spoiling stuff; they can't stand anything much in the way of incense: of which I should say this wife of yours is likely to get her full share. By the way, I wish you could have heard her just now, calling me to account! it was the richest fun—and all so sensible too."

"What was it? Tell me," said James, with almost boyish eagerness. Whereupon Raynton laughed sardonically; and repeated the staple of the conversation which had passed between Gabrielle and himself.

"I was rather afraid, though, as I heard her talk, that she would turn out—little as she looked it—something in the strong-minded line; inclined to come it over her husband, you know, and so forth. When you joined us, I opened my eyes and watched you both, like another Argus. Certainly my fears were groundless. Sweetness and deference itself! I wish that sage precept, 'Wives, submit yourselves'—were always half as well exemplified!"

"It is early days with us yet, you know," said James, pitying the half-wistful, half-bitter tone in which these last words were spoken.

"That's true. This afternoon ten years,

now, I may come over here again, and find you fighting."

"She pokered and I tonged ; eh ?"

"Nobody knows. There's nothing dependable, my dear Gordon, under the sun. No, not even this good brute's good back : though it looks so, don't it ?" said Raynton, as he mounted his horse.

* * * * *

"Ah James !" said Gabrielle, when they met again : "Next time you ask me to put on a white *pique*, I shall know what it means."

"What will it mean ?" said James.

"That somebody, in whose eyes you wish me to look well, is coming *incognito* to luncheon."

"And do you suppose, you conceited child, that you look well in white *pique*?"

"I suppose that you think so," replied Gabrielle, laughing.

"Well ! the fitness of things considered,

it is just the dress for a pure white innocent little thing like you."

"James, James—" putting her hand before his mouth : "Do you know what I pray every day?"

"That you may every day get deeper into your husband's heart, my child ? Because so it is."

"That I may be kept from pride and vain-glory ; and from believing what you tell me."

"Thank you, Gabrielle."

"Nonsense, James. You understand. What you tell me about myself. I find it so very, very difficult, when I am with you, to be humble."

"Raynton's sage warnings were hardly necessary !" thought James : "She's not in much danger of spoiling, yet, I fancy."

But he never questioned how it might be, that, in knowing her own weakness, she was strong.

CHAPTER VIII.

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

GABRIELLE and Cissy were returning from a ride; traversing at a foot's pace one of the shady lanes that lay between Farnley and Meddiscombe. Every now and then, they paused to gratify Cissy's passion for the honeysuckle with which, on either side, the hedges were fragrant. And it was in one of these pauses—while Cissy was bending over her horse's neck, and gathering spray after spray—that Gabrielle, looking on down the lane, became aware of a slight, clerical figure, somewhat above

the middle height, advancing rapidly and, to all appearance—for his eyes were fixed upon the ground—unconsciously, in their direction.

“Cissy,” said Gabrielle, in a low tone :
“Cissy, I do believe——”

She stopped short; and Cissy, startled, dropped the honeysuckle.

“What is it? Why, Gabrielle! there’s Mr. Godfrey. I did not know he had come back.”

“No more did I,” she replied, in the same low voice. Immediately afterwards, he had raised his eyes, had recognized Gabrielle. He hesitated, half pausing for one moment; then quickened his pace: and half a dozen strides further brought him to the horses’ side.

Perhaps the straight cut of his coat, the uniform blackness of the cloth, so different from the loose suits of gray tweed wherein

Charlie's lay life had delighted : perhaps it was partly to these, that the change in his appearance was owing. Anyhow, the change was there. Gabrielle could hardly realize that this grave, rather ascetic, young clergyman was the self-same Charlie who, three years back, had gone nutting and blackberrying with her, in the Eversfield lanes.

He had become thin and pale, or rather yellow—yellow mingled with brown. His forehead was no longer smooth ; he looked thoughtful, a little worn. The boyish air which had once characterized him, was gone ; he was a man now, every inch of him :—a grave, hardworking, somewhat melancholy, man. Even the fair hair and the simple blue eyes partook of the general transformation. The one seemed trimmer, smoother, more closely cut. The others, simple as ever, had lost their sunniness ; they appeared to be gazing into life, as ex-

pecting and prepared, to see there more of evil than of good, more of misfortune than of happiness.

"Well, Gabrielle!" he began; then, catching himself up, with a half smile—"I beg your pardon; I should say Mrs. Gordon, I suppose, now. So you are at home again? I am glad to see you looking so well—Miss Gordon, how are you?" And he passed on to Cissy.

Then Gabrielle saw that even his manner was altered. Its peculiar buoyancy had passed away. It was like the rest of him: sober, grave, subdued.

"I am sorry to see *you* looking so ill, Charlie! I fear you overwork yourself at Meddiscombe."

"No;" his under lip trembled, just a little, though his voice was steady and calm: "I have no more than I can get through with perfect ease, thank you. Be-

sides, I am only just returned from a long outing."

"I know," said Gabrielle, smiling: "Do you suppose that I—that we could have been all this time at Farnley without inquiring about you? It was the very first thing of which I thought, when we got home.—We are expecting a few people to dinner, this evening; don't you think——"

"Thank you," he repeated, hurriedly: "I am rather busy to-day. I'm sorry I can't turn, and walk a little way with you: but I must go on at once. I have to baptize a sick child."

"You'll 'do your endeavours' to let us see you at Farnley soon, I hope, though?" said Cissy.

"Yes, indeed," said Gabrielle: "You must dine with us, the first evening that you can."

"Thank you," he repeated once more:

" You are very kind. Good-bye, Mrs.—Gordon."

" No—Gabrielle, please," she said, blushing. Then, lowering her voice, as she bent towards him : " Charlie, I thought we agreed that we would always be brother and sister."

" Well ! good-bye, Gabrielle, then—since you wish that compact to hold good."

He grasped, almost wrung her hand ; and, with a hasty farewell to Cissy, hurried away. They looked after him ; he was striding along at the same pace as before :—he never once turned his head.

" Poor Charlie !" exclaimed Gabrielle, some minutes later ; after an abstracted silence, in which Cissy, for a wonder, had shared.

" Poor Charlie indeed !" rejoined Cissy : " He'll turn into a melancholy madman, or a Fakir, or a dancing dervish, or something equally unpleasant, before long."

"Did you see much of him in the winter, Cissy?"

"Yes, a good deal. We had several very amicable dialogues."

"What about?"

"Oh—subjects of mutual interest; and they did him good. At least, I thought so; he used to brighten. But now he's down again, among the dead men."

"I must get James to ask him to dinner; and he shall take you in, Cissy."

"Thanks, dear; that's an honour with which I can dispense. I don't see why the task of dissipating his fumes should always fall on me. You'd better set James to do it. You know James is omnipotent."

Some days afterwards, a Farnley groom brought Charlie a formal invitation: which Charlie—aware that the trial of seeing Gabrielle at the head of another man's table, at home in another man's house, was a

trial that must be faced—Charlie accepted.

And he did take Cissy into dinner.

“Do you like Brierley Lodge, Miss Gordon?”

“I like the jessamine on the porch,” said Cissy.

“But not the place itself?”

“As a rule, No. As an exception, I sometimes like a little bit of it: the particular bit in which I chance to be, when anything pleasant happens: for instance, when a letter from Gabrielle is brought to me in the dining-room, I like the dining-room: till I take the letter upstairs.—But don’t mention it, Mr. Godfrey. Since we must leave, we must, and there’s an end of it. And pray say nothing to make Olivia suspect my feelings. She would either be wretched, or look for a house elsewhere: which, devoted as she is to Annie, would never do. In her presence, I bottle up my prejudices, and be-

have as though Brierley Lodge were a synonymous term for Paradise."

"But that must be awfully hard. Upon my word, I'm very sorry for you."

"Well, certainly, it is a little hard to live in a state of bottledom. However, when my heart is peculiarly 'o'erfraught,' and 'the grief that cannot speak' is whispering with peculiar loudness, I retire to my room, lock the door, and sing the following refrain :

'I don't like this place, I don't.
I won't like this place, I won't.
I can't bear this place, I can't.
I shan't ever settle in this place, I shan't.'

That, repeated two or three times, is a wonderful relief. And when it fails, I send for Spitfire, and make him run away with me. And Brierley Lodge, I pretend, is under his hoofs, being trampled to atoms. The first few yards dispose of the drawing-room ; the next few, the dining-room ; and so till my

wrath abates. Sometimes, it isn't necessary to go beyond the first story ; sometimes the spification extends to the attics—the chimneys even."

"I should have thought it would begin with the chimneys."

"No, I have no particular grudge against them. I've never sat in them, lamenting Farnley, and sulking. But don't look so concerned, Mr. Godfrey. I'm not tired, yet, of my life. I only say all this, because you listen, and because I'm a chatterbox and an egotist. Of course, though, I've left out the pleasant parts. Beings 'yearning for sympathy,' always do. And, when I consider, the pleasant parts make up the better half. However, before I left Farnley, they made up the whole, or nearly the whole ; and I don't approve of the change."

"Such changes are not uncommon, I fear," said poor Charlie : "The sooner that

we can make up our minds to put happiness out of the question, and to plod on at our work, from day to day, without expecting it : the better for us."

"Mr. Godfrey, how dreadfully hydropathical !—misanthropical, I mean. Do you mistake the world for Pharaoh's brick-kiln ? That was just the tone of voice in which one of the wretched set-a-thief-to-catch-a-thief superintendants might have said : 'Fulfil your tasks, your daily tasks, as when there was straw !'

"Miss Gordon," said Charlie, biting his lip to repress a smile : "Forgive me, but I really think you are a little too flippant."

"Indeed ? Well, so I am ; I won't quarrel with your candour. Seriously, though, if I looked upon life as some people look upon it—as a great treadmill where there is nothing but work, work, work, all day—I should wish I had never been born !

But I don't look upon it so," she added, petulantly: "Life is bright and beautiful, abounding in sunshine, and flowers, and music; and we are free to enjoy them all, as long, and as heartily, as possible. That's my firm belief. You shan't shake it. You'd be far happier if you'd make it your own."

"It is my own, to a degree; but I believe something else as well."

"What, pray?"

"I believe—I see—that life abounds no less in clouds than in sunshine, in thorns than in flowers, in wailing than in music; and more."

"Because things are so distorted. I didn't say, I am no such idiot as to say, that no one is unhappy. I simply assert that no one ought to be unhappy; that we are not created for unhappiness. I feel it; I feel joy to be my element; I feel sunshine to be

my native air ; I feel that there is in my nature, no real sympathy with pain, or death, or misery. They are not congenial ; they sit ill on me, like badly-made clothes. Then, work—as you call it : I deny that, in the treadmill sense, work is intended. The work of birds is to sing ; and of flowers to bloom ; and of stars to shine ; and of bees to gather honey."

" Miss Gordon, birds and flowers and stars and bees have never fallen ; they are free—much more free, at least, than we are—from the curse of the fall."

Cissy was silent. A new idea had dawned upon her mind.

" If"—pursued Charlie, seeing in her eyes a shade of unwonted seriousness : " If we, who have fallen, find that the means by which to rise, to regain our lost estate, is to struggle boldly and patiently towards it, through pain, sorrow, death : should we not train ourselves

to look calmly on these things, to accept them as inevitable—perhaps even to bless them, as our teachers, our deliverers, our truest friends ? ”

Still Cissy was silent ; still her countenance retained that pensive cast. And Charlie, regarding her—young, bright, just entered on her course of life's long discipline, and finding it, as, at first, most of us find it, so inexplicable, so hard ; —Charlie felt in his heart something of tenderness, of pity, of a desire to shield her from those troubles which yet, in theory, he acknowledged to be so beneficial.

Suddenly, catching his eye, she coloured ; and said with a light laugh :

“ Well, Mr. Godfrey ! I think we had better choose another subject. If we dive deeper into this, we shall soon be in a maze of Thomas à Kempisisms, fathers, schools, and I don't know what ; and such considerations

are not exactly the things for a dinner-party.
We'll go to something else."

Whether they went to something else, or no, the conversation never flagged. It is to be hoped that the lady on Charlie's left hand, and the gentleman on Cissy's right hand, felt themselves content with their own respective partners. For not one word did that lady get from Charlie, or that gentleman from Cissy, throughout dinner. And at night, Charlie returned to Meddiscombe in better spirits than, when he quitted it, he would have believed possible; while Cissy realized more forcibly than ever before, the exceeding bad taste which Gabrielle had shewn, in marrying James when she might have married Mr. Godfrey!

All this time, James, in the intervals of his other occupations, was working hard at his great book; that "Philosophical Review," of which he had told Gabrielle;

and which, a month or two before their return to England, he had begun. Gabrielle was deeply interested in watching its progress ; it was, in fact, scarcely less in her thoughts, than in his own. Often, after her sisters-in-law were gone, she would steal into his study, and sit quietly down, out of sight, behind his chair : and here would spend hours : sometimes reading,—more frequently, working and thinking ; listening to the sound of his pen, and weaving dreams of its future glory. When he had finished, she would lean over his shoulder, commenting on what he had done ; and the thoughtfulness, the depth, of her comments, quite took James by surprise. Once or twice, even, they gave him a hint.

She never accused him, as The Featherstone might have done, of being too abstruse, or too “bookish” for her. What she could not at first understand, she asked him to explain,

listening with childlike confidence, as he did so. Sometimes, when he flagged, she recalled him to himself; in moments of discouragement, spurred him on; opened his manuscript, placed his chair, mended his pens, removed every excuse for idleness: and, as it were, forced him to the work. And she never enticed him from it, to drive or to walk with her; she never complained of loneliness, never hindered him in any way. In all things she was, as she had prayed to be, a true helpmeet: forgetting herself.

CHAPTER IX.

Your sweet faces make good fellows fools.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

"IT strikes me—" observed Raynton, looking at James with a sardonic smile: "It strikes me, Gordon, that I was slightly mistaken, when I said that you were not the sort to turn into a domestic man. A more perfect model of domesticity than your present life, could scarcely be imagined."

Raynton had been spending a few days at Farnley, and was leaving it in a somewhat envious, an exceedingly bitter, and a generally exasperated state of mind. He felt that, before he started, he must relieve himself by a hit at James.

"And, pray, in what respect is my life more domestic than yours?" said James, a little nettled.

"Come! you needn't fire up, my dear fellow. A domestic life is a very comfortable thing. I don't suppose a tame cat in the kingdom would exchange its cushion, for 'all the glories of the chase.'"

"Probably not," said James, coldly.
"What do you deduce from that?"

"I've just told you, man:—a domestic life is a very comfortable thing! And most magnanimous I feel myself, for owning it, and for leaving you—as I do—my blessing, in returning to my harder lot."

"Your harder lot!" repeated James:
"Now I should say, that, all things considered, you are far more of the genuine domestic character than I am. You have a set of children to see after, in addition to your wife."

"Nothing whatever to the point," said Raynton, composedly : "I might have fifty wives, and a hundred children, and yet remain as undomestic as though I had none ! A man is not a domestic man, because he happens to possess a domestic circle. It is when his personal comfort and happiness depend upon that circle : when he feels all out of sorts, for instance, if his wife leave home for a week ; can't be contented with his own ideas, till he has run to communicate them to her—perhaps ask her advice ; delights in her little coddling ways, such as women have the knack of ; in fact, basks in them, as the tame cat basks before the fire : —it is only then that he has a right to be called a domestic man."

"A pleasing picture!" said James, ironically.

"Yes ; I agree with you, my dear fellow. A thoroughly pleasing picture. One that, if

generally prevalent, would make this earth a second Eden. However, some of us, you see, are cursed with inconveniently extensive desires—desires that cannot rest satisfied with what is pleasing alone; so these sweet pictures are not generally prevalent. And this earth is not a second Eden. And its cats occasionally go wild."

"And its grapes occasionally sour," James muttered, between his teeth. Raynton heard, but pretended not to hear, maintaining his sardonic equanimity. His horse was waiting at the door; and he hastened to mount.

"Never mind, Gordon," said he, pausing ere he applied the spurs: "'Ah, who can tell how hard it is to climb——?' Etcetera. And not worth the pains, after all, if report say true. You're better off on your cushion. Accept my *benedictus*."

He was gone, before James could reply.

James, albeit intensely disgusted, remembered that "Lookers-on see most of the game." He stood for some time in the doorway, lost in silent meditation ; and re-entered the house, determined to watch himself, and to search out the truth.

He sat down to his writing. An hour elapsed—two hours ; he was still alone : he began to long for Gabrielle, to wonder why she had not, as usual, come to sit behind his chair. Another half-hour ; the work flagged ; he could not collect his thoughts. It was raining : if she were out, she would, ten to one, catch cold, and suppose that cough returned——! He found himself looking out of the window ; with real anxiety, watching the torrents. Bah ! this was being a domestic man, indeed !

He resumed his writing with fresh vigour ; but ere long, it flagged again. He wanted to consult Gabrielle about the last few

pages :—as to whether they should be retained, or struck out. Still rain—rain—rain. He started up ; he must really go and—The door opened ; in she came : dripping, breathless, laughing merrily,—she had run all the way from the lodge ! James's anxiety revived. Was she very tired ? She must change her dress at once : and then rest. But when she had left the room, he felt conscious of some slight humiliation. What could be more domestic than this ?

A few minutes more, and she was back in the study—all fresh, and bright, and sweet. He wished that he could have welcomed her without such foolish pleasure—could have asked her opinion on those pages, without such absurd eagerness :—wished, moreover, that he had not felt himself compelled to second her criticisms ; in deference to them, striking out one half of what he

had written, and materially altering the rest.

Then, again, when, after dinner, he joined her in the drawing-room, and she sprang to meet him, linking her arm in his, and exclaiming how pleasant it was to have him quite alone : then again, he wished that his heart had responded less warmly to that exclamation ; that he had not, in his turn, felt so happy to have her alone.

Yes ; Raynton was right, he feared. And every day, throughout the ensuing week, as he maintained his strict self-watch, served to confirm this fear. He saw every day more plainly, that his life—so far from being the grand, self-sufficient life which he had set up as his ideal—was now so intertwined with Gabrielle's, that the one was almost entirely dependent on the other for all that made its earthly possession valuable. Even his book, his chief business, owed much of its progress to her ; to her incitements, her

zealous and contagious interest. He was not sure whether a wife of this kind were not, in reality, more of a drawback than a wife of the Dora Copperfield kind !

He must shake himself free. He must not—even to Gabrielle—be a slave. He remembered the year of indulgence to which he had pledged himself. That year was already elapsed; more than elapsed. The following Friday would be the anniversary of his wedding-day. The year had dated from the day of his engagement.

But he would overshoot the mark a little further yet : just till that Friday, that anniversary, was gone by. In the interim—for the last time—he would give himself full swing; would be as affectionate, as “domestic,” as he chose.

The day dawned and set. The next morning :

“Gabrielle,” said he: “I must turn over

a new leaf. I have wasted no end of time lately."

"Have you, James? I should not have thought it. Your book is getting on famously."

"I fancy"—with an effort—"that my book would get on better, if you did not sit in my study while I write."

She looked up: half pained, half wondering.

"Oh, James! Do you think so really?"

Her eyes and her tone combined, were almost too much for him; but he hardened his heart.

"I do indeed. I should have less difficulty in concentrating my thoughts. You sit very still; but it is impossible to forget that I am not alone; and—— In fact, Gabrielle, I can't forbid you the room, but I am convinced that it would be better, both for me and for the work, if you stayed away."

"Then I will stay away," said Gabrielle,

after an inward struggle. She smiled as she spoke ; but her lip quivered, just a little : and there was something like a tear in her eye.

"Then that's agreed," said James : "In writing hours, henceforth, I am alone."

"Very well," she answered, gently ; and he rose to go. But catching, as he reached the door, a little irrepressible sigh, he paused —hesitated : finally, by a sudden impulse, turned : and took her into his arms.

"My darling—" he said : and kissed away the tear that still trembled on her eyelashes : " You must not vex yourself about me, or I shall curse the day when I was selfish enough to marry you."

Before she could answer, he had quitted the room : leaving his words to be interpreted as best they might.

CHAPTER X.

Henceforth
The course of life that seemed so flowery to me
With you for guide and master, only you,
Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken short,
And ending in a ruin.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

“WELL, my boy!” said Mr. Morris, laying aside his pen: although he had just filled it, preparatory to concluding the last sentence of Section XI, in the Introduction to a Treatise on the Ten Missing Tribes of Israel, with Certain Interesting Conjectures touching their Wanderings, their Settlements, and their Posterity:—“ Well, my boy! here you are, at last. Come and sit down.”

As he spoke, he tilted a chair: dislodging two gigantic slippers and a shoehorn.

"Thanks," said Charlie, seating himself in their place, and throwing off his hat—pushing back with something of weariness, a heavy wave of fair hair. Then, during several minutes, he sat silent, deep in thought.

"Tired?" said Mr. Morris, presently.
"Tired?"

"Not in the least, thank you," replied the young man: and hesitated. And while he hesitates, we will take a glance round the room.

It is a room in Meddiscombe Rectory; where Charlie, for nearly two years, has been settled—and not settled alone: Mr. Morris, yielding to his earnest entreaties, has consented to share his home. Here, in this study, are collected all those treasured possessions, which we have seen before in that other study, at the creeper-covered cottage.

Here are the leather arm-chairs, the huge black inkstand, the picture of the Crucifixion, the piles of manuscript, and the bitten pens. Here, too, as ever, are roses—fresh and sweet. And the windows, like those other windows, look westward. Mr. Morris can still sit, as he has been wont, and watch the sunset: dreaming his vague yet happy dreams, concerning the sunset of life.

Over his countenance has stolen, of late, an expression of deep repose. His dim eyes have less of sadness in them: more of peace. Occasionally a smile—chastened, but contented—hovers about his lips. He has the air of one who, after long strife, has been carried in the evening stillness from the battlefield, and lain upon a bank, to rest: around whom birds chant vespers—zephyrs breathe fragrance—dying rays fall, with tempered radiance, athwart his face. Quietness has come to him; and as his eyes close,

he thinks on his past conflict, and thanks God.

Charlie too is somewhat altered. He too bears about him the marks of bygone strife. But, so far from being spent, he seems refreshed: girded anew. Still bright, still simple, still hopeful, are his blue eyes; his forehead, one deep furrow overlooked, retains much of the smoothness of early youth. The lines of his mouth are set more sternly than of yore; but they are still ready, at a moment's notice, to relax in an almost boyish laugh.

"I have been to Farnley about that subscription," said he, his hesitation past: "Gordon will give five pounds, and Gabrielle three——"

"Well?" returned Mr. Morris; and he pushed the manuscript aside. The young man started from his chair, and began to pace the room.

"I wish—" he burst out—"I wish I felt sure that Gabrielle was happy!"

"Any reason to fear that she is not?" asked Mr. Morris, in his sing-song voice.

"Well—I don't know: I have no right—and yet—"

He paused in his walk, sitting down impetuously as he had risen:

"Mr. Morris, I can't, for the life of me, help thinking of these two lines,

'I hate him for the vow he spoke,
I hate him for the vow he broke.'

Whenever I see her, those lines ring in my head."

"Too strong, Godfrey, my boy," said Mr. Morris.

"Very likely. I'm not a saint, you know, yet: though they do stick Reverend before my name. He neglects her; I'm positive he neglects her; and 'tis all that I can do to stand it. Only for my office, I verily be-

lieve, I should have knocked him down, long ago."

"Ah—" one of Mr. Morris's groaning sighs: "Yes. Hard, inexpressibly, to look on and be patient!"

"When first she married," continued Charlie, with vehemence, "she was happiness itself. One glance at her was enough to make a fellow feel sunshine all over. It nearly reconciled me, upon my word, to—But now—I do wish you could have been with me, this afternoon. Then you'd know."

"Do know. Often observed it," said Mr. Morris, sadly.

"Have you? No wonder. Everyone must observe it: everyone who knew her before. That settled look of—well, not sorrow, exactly—wistfulness, pensiveness; which has come over her face: and that manner—all the old eagerness gone: yet so sweet still—so far more taking than any

other manner I ever see : " and Charlie went off into abstraction.

" Nevertheless," said Mr. Morris, in his dreamy tone, " she had the desire of her heart."

" Ay ; so had he, the vil—" he checked himself : " And finely he's showing his gratitude ! However, I'll speak of him no more ; I can't think of him, with common patience. To go back to her : what do you imagine I found her doing, just now ? Sitting all alone at a table, with both her hands up to her head, and, before her, a great book : a Latin grammar, I discovered, afterwards."

" Learning Latin to kill time ?"

" No, no ; you'll hear directly. I had no sooner asked her how she did, than she looked up at me, just in her old way, and asked my help—those irregular verbs were so tiresome ! I set her right, of course ;

and then I asked what on earth she was about—victimizing herself with that dry old Latin ? did she like it ? And she said, Oh no, she hated it ; that confession came out quite involuntarily, by the way :—but, if she knew Latin, she might some time be able to make herself useful to James. And there was a slate full of construing—which she had been plodding over, till her head ached—I made her own that—and, in one place, a great blur, a whole sentence gone ; washed away—you may guess how. And that sweet face of hers, so pale and tired. Mr. Morris, if that scene were not enough to touch the heart of any fellow who wasn't a stoic, or a block of marble : I should like to know what is?"

"Very touching. Very touching. Poor child ! Poor child !" said Mr. Morris, huskily.

"Well, then I asked—a mistake, per-

haps ; but it escaped me—why she didn't get her husband to teach her, instead of working herself to death, all alone. And she answered, in the patient tone that nearly drives me mad : oh, James knew nothing about it : besides, he was too busy.—Too busy, indeed !—I told her I hoped she would make what use she liked of me ; let me correct her exercises, and so forth, whenever she felt inclined. She thanked me ten times more than the affair was worth, and said that she should go on with fresh courage, now that she had someone to whom she might turn, in an emergency. Quite naturally this speech came out—with out suspicion of any inference, bad or good. But—don't you agree with me, Mr. Morris ? —there must somewhere be something very wrong, if she cannot turn to her husband."

"Never take evil for granted," said Mr. Morris : " May be motives underneath.

Wishes to take him by surprise, perhaps.
Don't know."

"No ; and I, for one, don't believe," said Charlie, hotly : " Nothing can be plainer. She sees that he's bored by her, and she shrinks into herself. That's what it is ; neither more nor less. It makes my blood boil."

" Well !" said Mr. Morris ; " There's one comfort. She has a Protector Who loves her better than you can. He sets her lessons. He'll look after her. It will all come right : in the end."

" How I envy your heights !" said Charlie, sighing : " I would give worlds, always to see things as you do."

" My boy—" and Mr. Morris laid his hand on the young man's shoulder : " You must have patience. Step by step, you know ; line upon line ; a gradual progress from form to form. You have learned much,

already ; especially in the last few years. Your disappointment about poor little Mrs. Gordon :—that got you on immensely."

" Do you think so ?" said Charlie, humbly : " I am glad. Certainly, in my parish, it has helped me : experienced me in various phases of trial and temptation, quickened my powers of sympathy—and so forth. Yes ; I would not, for the world, have missed one pang of all that I went through. It was more of a blessing, than of a trial. I can look back on it with thankfulness, now :—now that it is over."

" Quite over ? No remains ?" said Mr. Morris ; and a father's tenderness beamed from his dim eyes.

" No remains, thank God," returned Charlie, emphatically : " I can meet her with perfect calmness. I love her as much as ever, certainly ; but in a different way. I believe that, even if she were free again, it

would not occur to me to wish to marry her."

"Shake hands," exclaimed Mr. Morris, seizing Charlie's left hand, as he spoke: "Shake hands. Congratulate you. A victory. Congratulate you from my heart."

Charlie smiled his old sunshiny smile, with a touch of good-natured amusement: then rose from his chair.

"Well! I suppose it is almost dinner-time," said he: but Mr. Morris did not hear. He had relapsed into a dream, his eyes turned westward: where, over the sky and the calm landscape, was stealing the golden haze which so often precedes an autumnal sunset.

"Now—" he murmured—"Whenever the bell may ring, I am ready. He is happy again; what have I left—on earth—to desire?"

"Mr. Morris, don't talk so! I couldn't

spare you ; you don't know what you are to me. Why, but for you, I might now be as miserable as at first. I owe all to you, and your——”

“ Ah ! ” said Mr. Morris : “ Yes. Wonderful how all has worked together for good ! Only those who have suffered, can comfort. I have suffered ; and I have comforted—her boy ! ”

As he spoke, a smile—to Charlie's eye, a smile full of Heaven—broke forth upon his face. It was a ray from the light that comes at eventide.

* * * * *

The sunset was over: A rich, gorgeous, truly autumnal sunset it had been ; and still, in the western sky, lingered remnants of its glory : streaks of crimson, of purple, of gold —blending near the horizon into half-defined hues of green, yellow, and gray. Gabrielle sat alone upon the terrace, reading

an old book—"Evelina"—which she had hunted out of the library. Chilly dews were falling; and she was none too warmly clad: but nobody came to remind her of either fact. No friendly voice, from the many windows which overlooked the terrace, warned her that her seat was becoming dangerous. So far as her health went, it was fortunate that she happened to be at the end, instead of at the beginning, of the book.

It was finished. She closed it, laid it down; and, leaning back in her seat, looked westward, towards those scenes of fading splendour, with a wistful sadness very touching in one so young.

"Yes—" she was thinking—with reference to the old book, and its felicitous termination: "Yes; it is very pleasant: but it is not real. The common mistake of novels . . . that when two people who love

each other, marry, their troubles end. That is not true ; it is not life."

And Gabrielle sighed.

The last faint glory streaks were dying ; the veil of twilight was gradually enshrouding the earth. But still she sat, her listless attitude unchanged, looking westward ; and presently, half-unconsciously, she began to quote the three concluding lines of Thekla's song.

"' Du Heilige, rufe dein Kind zuruck ,
Ich habe genossen das irdische Gluck :
Ich habe gelebt und geliebet.' *

"Yes, I have tasted the highest earthly good. I have known the highest earthly love. If I lived a century longer, earth could give me nothing more, nothing fuller or sweeter. Is it very wrong, I wonder—very idle—to wish to die ? to fly from a place where joy, for me, is exhausted :

* "Thou Holy One, call Thy child back ;
I have tasted the highest Good :
I have lived and loved."

where I am wanted no longer, no longer necessary to anyone, even the dearest? I suppose it is; and yet, how hard not! Wishes are so ungovernable."

She rose, and wandering restlessly to the balustrade, stood leaning over it: her eyes strained towards the sky, where, one by one, the first faint stars had begun to glimmer.

"Papa," she said, half aloud: "Are you there? Do you see me? Oh, surely, if he did, he would ask the angels to fetch me. He would have pity on my loneliness. Would you not, my own father?"

She paused; but none answered. Only the stars still came glimmering out, one by one.

"I suppose I ought to go in," she thought at last, with another heavy sigh: "It is growing chilly." Then she turned, and entered the house. The hall was very silent, very lonely. The statues seemed to scan her, as she passed, with their cold and

passionless eyes. She went into the drawing-room ; equally silent, equally lonely, was all there. The lamp was lighted ; the curtains were drawn : external luxury abounded—but nothing more. Gabrielle threw aside her hat, drew a chair towards the table where her workbox stood, and took out a piece of embroidery.

The clock struck half-past eight.

“Oh dear!” and again she sighed : “How long these desolate evenings are ! If I had only a little child—” the sadness deepened in her eyes :—“a dear sweet little child to go and see, and tuck up in its bed, and afterwards come down to think about, and to work for : how different they would be ! My whole life would be different. I should feel that I was wanted, then ; and perhaps”—her eyes filled—“perhaps James would be different too. He would love it, and take a pleasure in it, and it would interest him, as

I"—another heavy sigh—"have not the power to interest him. Then we should have to consult, how to manage it, and so on : and that would surely draw us nearer to one another.

"Oh, how I could love a little child!—my own child. What care I would take of him ! How I should delight in teaching him to speak and to walk, watching him grow dearer, more sensible, every day ! He would be such a darling—let me see : golden—brown hair, perhaps, like Cissy's—and large dark eyes, like his father's—and rosy cheeks with dimples—and a smiling little mouth, so sweet to kiss. But there is no use in thinking of him ; he would have come before, if he were coming at all. And I ought not to grumble ; and yet—Marian has three, and so has The Postlethwaite; and they don't need them, as I do ; their husbands—But—" she started from the listless attitude into which

she had once more fallen ; “ But what am I thinking of, to complain like this? That one year, especially ; that first, bright year —in itself, it was a lifetime of happiness. Yes—few can say, as I can :

‘ Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück.’ ”

The door opened ; Wilcox entered with a salver.

“ I beg your pardon, ma'am. I thought master was here.”

“ Is that note for your master? Give it to me. I will take it myself.”

Up sprang Gabrielle : all listlessness gone. She took the note, and, crossing the hall, opened gently, somewhat timidly, the door of James's study. He was sitting at his table, surrounded by huge volumes ; a manuscript open before him. But he was not writing, although a pen lay between his fingers. His brows were contracted ; he looked deep in thought—pale, and worn, and harrassed.

"James—this is for you."

With the pre-occupied manner of one roused from a dream, he held out his hand, opened the note, and ran his eye over the contents. Then, tossing it aside :

"All right," said he: "No answer. Merely from Reynolds, to account for his not keeping that appointment."

He dipped his pen in the ink, and bent over the manuscript.

"No answer, I said, Gabrielle." She stole nearer to his chair.

"Aren't you tired, James? You have been writing such a long, long time."

"Yes I am tired to death; don't interrupt me. I shall have finished directly; and then I shall run down to the vicarage. I want to see Edgecumbe."

"To the vicarage, at this hour, James?"

"Yes; I shall be sure to find him in"—
writing.

"But it would do you much more good to come to the drawing-room ; and I would sing to you."

"Thanks, Gabrielle ; those are luxuries in which I can't indulge—to-night, at any rate. Besides, I want a breath of fresh air."

"Then why not take a turn on the terrace, and let me go with you ? I never see anything of you now."

"We can't be always tacked to each other's apron-strings. No : I must go to the vicarage ; and meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile, I am hindering you," said Gabrielle, a little bitterly. He neither contradicted her, nor raised his eyes. She turned, and quitted the room.

"Don't sit up for me," he called after her, as the door closed. Then, bending lower over his writing :

"It would never do"—he told himself—"to revive that old habit of flying to her

whenever I am in need of refreshment. If she enthralled me less, I might be with her more; but, as it is—"on tore his pen.

Gabrielle had returned to the silent drawing-room; had once more shut herself in, with the comfortable chairs and sofas, the pretty tables and ornaments, the valuable books and pictures. But to her, nothing, at this moment, had any value, or prettiness, or comfort, about it. So far as her feelings went, she might have been in a wilderness.

The piano was open. She sat down, and began to sing one of her favourites, a little French "Romance"—"Le Fil de la Vierge." The accompaniment, although plaintive, soothed her; the words—the last verse especially—she repeated again and again.

And long after the lights in James's study were extinguished, and the manuscript was laid by, her voice—sweet and thrilling as

ever—might still be heard ; singing on and on and on, in that lonely drawing-room.

“ Adieu, pauvre fil blanc ! je t'aime ; vole encore ;
Mais ne va pas,
T'arrêter aux buissons dont l'épine dévore
Et tend les bras :
Ne te repose pas, quand du haut des tourelles,
Le jour a fui ;
Vole au haut, près de Dieu : les seuls amours fidèles
Sont avec Lui.”

And as the last three chords, following like an echo, died into silence, some voice deep in Gabrielle's heart repeated :

“ Avec Lui.”

CHAPTER XI.

His spirit wholly turn'd
To stern ambition's dream, to that fierce strife
Which leads to life's high places, and recked not
What lovely flowers might perish in his path.

LETITIA ELIZABETH LANDON.

NOW and then, James, obeying the arbitrary voice of his genius, suspended his great work, to devote himself for a season, to some one or other of minor importance; some pamphlet, essay, or review. These—carelessly sending them to take their chance in the wide world, and returning with fresh vigour to his history—he soon lost sight of: almost forgot. It was, however, to these, and to these alone—the recreations of his pen; that certain para-

graphs which, about this time, appeared in a critical journal of high repute : were owing.

"Four years have now elapsed—" so these paragraphs ran—"since the publication of the 'Four Essays:' a work whose rare originality, and power of expression, stamped it, notwithstanding a few crudities and extravagances, as the production of a superior mind. This stamp, the title-page of the second edition—which bore the author's name—only confirmed. James Fortescue Gordon had, in the previous year, been distinguished as the successful competitor for the highest undergraduate honours of the University of Cambridge. We may doubtless attribute to this circumstance, much of the interest with which his work was honoured. But that interest was shared by some for whom the words 'Senior Wrangler' possess no supernatural charm ;

and whose approbation was the best encouragement that the author of the 'Four Essays,' or that any other author, could receive.

"The career thus honourably begun, bids fair to fulfil its promise. Mr. Gordon continues to write, and to write well. We are happy to add a still higher encomium: he continues to write better. He has taken pains to sustain, and to extend, the interest to which his virgin work gave rise; and the blemishes which were then detected and pointed out to him, are, in his later pages, disappearing; gradually, but surely. In short, Mr. Gordon seems to be devoting himself, heart and soul, to the improvement of his remarkable talents; and since he is still a young man, and has ample time before him, we feel small hesitation in predicting that he will ultimately tower as an intellectual giant, among us.

"More than one of our literary fathers have been gathered, in the past year, to their rest; and of their survivors, not a few have attained the Biblical limit of human life. But among their children, are some worthy to fill the places which have been, which must be, vacated ; and of these, James Forescue Gordon ranks, to our eye, supreme. We know no one better calculated to emulate the celebrity of the great men who have recently been removed from our midst. We know of no name so likely to be inscribed among those that, while others perish, remain immortally glorious."

The journal in which these prophetical eulogiums appeared, was one not by any means distinguished for habitual lavishness of praise. Considerable curiosity about James and his writings, was awakened in the public mind; the paragraphs were repeatedly copied, and circulated far and wide. His name was

in every mouth ; thus, already, had arisen the auroral rays of his day of fame.

And was he happy ? Surely he should have been happy. For the applause of the multitude he cared little : but the approval of the wise few—for which he cared much—was his also. During this autumn, Geoffrey Savill spent a few days at Farnley ; read as much as was completed of the “Philosophical Review,” and foretold for it great things. Every external circumstance seemed to repeat the adjuration by which, a few years back, the young author had been encouraged : —“ Go on and prosper.” Yes—surely he should have been happy !

At dead of night, he sat alone ; and in a chronicle—half of facts, half of feelings—to which, in preference to any living *confidant*, he had occasional recourse ; inscribed his private impressions.

“ I am succeeding ; the world is smiling

on me; my book goes on apace; and, outwardly, all is well. Outwardly, I say; for inwardly—in my own mind—all is ill. I cannot—the confession is humiliating, but true—I *cannot* be my own master. I cannot rule, as I once determined to rule, in the empire of my soul; calmly, absolutely: Reason, hand in hand with the Will, my prime minister; the Affections, all the subordinate faculties, their obedient handmaids: each in its own place uniting with each, to form one harmonious whole—a grand, a perfect man.

“Such was my dream; but the reality—how far otherwise! Reason has not indeed failed me; but my will is too weak to act in unison with its dictates. Everything is out of order; everything is striving for a position which does not belong to it. What should be uppermost, sinks; what should be subordinate, rises: and takes the rule.

"The struggle to remedy this confusion is incessant, wears me almost to death. I find myself continually compelled to act against the bent of my inclinations. Thus, instead of advancing, I stand still and fight: and, to make this worse, I gain nothing by it; the battle, if not against me, is drawn.

"It was an evil hour when I first allowed my interests to concentrate in a woman. The affections, that weaker part, have ever since been creeping higher in my soul; entangling more inextricably in their Gordian knots, that peace which I had resolved should lie beyond the reach of external influences. Yet did I not also resolve, that it is better to be great, than to be happy? Why, then, should the diminution—**even the loss**—of my happiness so affect me? Because greatness implies self-sufficiency: and if any faculty within me depend—as my happiness does depend—on something beyond my own resources, for satisfaction; then I am not

great, but small; not strong, but impotent.

“ In the letter, in the outward man, no one could shew himself less of a Geraint than I! Sometimes whole days elapse without my crossing her path, from morning to night. The charge of weakness is certainly the last that a superficial observer would impute to me. But so long as, deep within me, I feel this constant craving for her presence; so long as to abstain from seeking her—for repose when I am tired—for sympathy in my cares and in my pursuits—for counsel in perplexity—for comfort, peace, joy at all times: so long as to abstain from this, is to do violence to my nature: so long—however I may appear to the world at large, I must to myself appear degraded:—a slave to her, and to my affections.

“ ‘ And I myself’—not only ‘ sometimes,’ but oftentimes—‘ despise myself; nor know I whether I be very base, or very manful; whether very wise, or very foolish: ’ Only

this I know : that I belong, not to myself, but to her ; and that I cannot—loathe my feebleness as I may, I *cannot*—break the chains. Although in deed, as I have said, I shatter them every day, in inclination they every day bind me faster.

“ Oh, it is not just that I, who am formed with aspirations so grand, so elevated, should at the same time be cursed with tendencies so mean, so low. He Who made me a man ; Who gave me to feel what manhood is; why does He oblige me to bow that manhood to a woman ? But be it so. Granted that my nature, through no fault of mine, is an unworthy nature: all the more glory in subduing it ! I will rise above my nature. I will trample it down.”

“ Not even God ”—he added, in his heart —“ shall bind me against my will.”

No wonder, with thoughts like these, that James became moody, morose ; sometimes

unduly excited, sometimes sorely depressed ! And the only influences which, now and then —even in these days—could touch or soften him, were Gabrielle's continued sweetness and gentleness, amid every provocation. In her own room alone, no human eye upon her, many a burst of passionate weeping, many an hour of agonized prayer, bore witness that the calmness of her demeanour was not the calmness of insensibility. But in his presence, she had always a smile wherewith to welcome him, always "a soft answer" wherewith to recompense the irritable words which, not unfrequently, were his only words to her, throughout the day. She never accused him of neglect ; she never forced her society upon him : on the rare, the increasingly rare, occasions when he did unbend, she never avenged herself by repulsing him in her turn.

" Meek souls there are, who little dream
Their daily strife an Angel's theme!"

Who can tell how often, at this time, that category included Gabrielle? Hers was indeed "daily strife;" only sustained by a constant remembrance of the vows by which she had pledged herself, "for better, for worse," to cleave to this her fallen ideal. For he was fallen: even in her eyes. Her experience as regarded him had gradually undermined her faith in the existence of any true ideal, short of the skies. As long as possible, she shut her eyes to the frailty in which she had once believed him to have no share; but stern reality, the witness of every day, compelled her, at length, to open them.

And then she saw that this hero of hers was no hero. She saw that he was egotistical; she saw that he was vain; she saw that whatever, in theory, he might be, in practice he was almost an atheist. And in addition, she believed that, as respected herself, he was fickle, heartless, cold. It was a bitter awak-

ening; and none could say how disastrous might have been its effects, had she not, throughout these years of trial, possessed two firm stays: by which to hold; and steady herself, when all around seemed failing.

The one was her trust in God. The other was her love for her husband: which never varied, even when, to all appearance, he was doing his best to uproot it.

Yes, she loved him still; she still clung to him: no longer, indeed, as an idol, an object of worship—but yet as the dearest, closest thing in the whole world, to her; one to whom God Himself had united her by an indissoluble tie; to whose errors she must be pitiful, trying to cover them—to whose service she must devote herself, as a part of her religion.

One evening—one Sunday evening—in the course of this autumn, James, entering hastily, found her bending over a book, spread open

on the table. Her head was supported by her little thin hands ; and her tears were falling fast.

“ What in the world is the matter, Gabrielle ? ” said he gruffly : “ You ’ll spoil that book, if you don ’t take care.”

Then, as she neither moved, nor raised her eyes, he took it from beneath them ; and brushed away the tears with which it was wet.

He was about to put it down again, when a pencil-mark attracted his attention ;—a pencil, he saw, lay near her on the table. He paused, standing behind her chair ; and ran his eye over the lines that her tears had watered.

“ What knowest thou, O Wife ! whether thou canst save thy husband ? ”

“ He strays—how far, to thee alone,
My Saviour, and my God, is known !
Yet think upon Thy Word which says
The wife may win him from his ways,
May haply mend the broken tie
That linked us for Eternity.

"In mercy, Lord, his soul defend,
And be my Counsellor and Friend,
For unto Thee, and only Thee,
I tell my tale of misery :
No eye but Thine has seen my tears,
No bosom shared my doubts and fears.

"Thou, too, art Witness, when I said
'Until death part us, we will wed'—
'Twas written on my fervent heart,
That we were not in death to part ;
But that we asked a blessing then,
Which we might ask in Heaven again.

"In Heaven ? If I alone could be
In Heaven, would it be Heaven to me ?
Save, save me from the thought, O Lord,
I will not go beyond Thy Word :
I'll labour for his soul and mine,
And all beside to Thee resign."

The lines marked, were the three first of
this last verse.

*In Heaven ! If I alone could be
In Heaven, would it be Heaven to me ?
Save, save me from the thought, O Lord.'*

James, as he read them, as his glance rested upon the faint, trembling pencil-marks, upon the tear stains, was conscious of a choking sensation in his throat—felt

his own eyes grow dim. He closed the book, replaced it on the table, and, steady-ing his voice with some effort, repeated, less gruffly, his former question :

“ What is the matter, Gabrielle ? ”

“ Oh, nothing to speak of, thank you,” said Gabrielle.

She rose, her face carefully averted : and, taking the book, stole with the weary foot-step, now habitual to her, out of the room.

James did not follow; somehow, he felt as though he had no longer any right to share or to soothe her troubles. But he snatched up the pencil which she had left on the table, and kissed it passionately. Then, re-turning to his study, sat long alone, in the darkness, thinking—thinking.

CHAPTER XII.

I might have saved her ;
Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha !
What is't thou sayest ? Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

ON the following day, Raynton came to spend a week at Farnley. He had lately lost his wife ; and had appeared to feel the bereavement more keenly than might have been expected, judging from his behaviour during her lifetime. Gabrielle, always on the watch to soothe and sympathize, was considerably touched by the change that had taken place in him. The sardonic manner had softened down into a confirmed despondency ; the satirical smile

came seldom, if ever ; he looked ill, broken, and oppressed. No other guests were, at this time, in the house ; and when he was not with James, he fell on her hands to entertain. In her gentle inobtrusive way, she did her best to insinuate balm—or what she regarded as balm—into his wounds. She had not liked him before ; but now, his evident wretchedness drew her towards him. This he saw, and, insensibly grateful, felt equally drawn towards her.

On the day of his departure, he and James were sitting in the study, when, suddenly, after a long, meditative silence, he said :

“ Gordon, forgive me—I don’t want to meddle ; but that poor little wife of yours is moping ; and it goes to my heart. She gives me the idea of being left too much alone.”

“ Indeed ?” said James.

“ Come, don’t be high-and-mighty,” went on

Raynton, in his cool way : "I mean no offence. But when a fellow has a good deal to absorb him in literary ways, he's apt to forget that the people with whom he lives, are not absorbed likewise : in fact, to let his books swallow him up. And it strikes me—no offence, Gordon—that that's the case with you."

" Unless I devote myself to my work, I shall never get on," said James, hotly.

" Well, but there's no reason in the world, why you shouldn't devote yourself to your work and your wife too. I'm sure she's as full as full can be, of interest, in all that concerns it—or you ; her head is not like most women's heads, stuffed with nonsense. Why shouldn't you let her go along with you, now, instead of throwing cold water——"

" Upon my word, Raynton, this is uncommonly strong," said James ; on the verge of taking mortal offence.

"Well! and you want something strong," returned Raynton, with more of heat than might have been supposed to exist in his phlegmatic nature: "I've not spoken half—no, nor a hundredth part—so strongly as I feel. I tell you, at the risk of your hating me for ever, and for your own sake, no less than for hers: that, if you don't look out, your wife will shortly be where mine is: and then how will it be with you?"

James started passionately from his chair, and confronted Raynton.

"What do you mean?" said he.

"I mean what I say, my dear fellow. Your neglect is breaking her heart. And when I see that, and think what she is—what I, with one like her, might have become—might been spared—" He stopped; for his voice was choked.

As for James, he could find no voice at all. He stood still, confronting Raynton.

That sentence—"Your wife will shortly be where mine is"—rang in his ears. He saw Gabrielle, his sweet, gentle, patient little Gabrielle, lying cold and rigid, in her white shroud ; and with this sight, this idea, words —everything—failed him.

"I daresay," continued Raynton, after a minute's pause, "that you think me, of all men, least fitted to lecture you upon your duties in a conjugal line. But my own failures have made me sensitive to the failures of others ; and, if you could know"—again his voice choked—"how terrible Remorse is: even where the subject of it was herself in some degree unworthy:—if you could feel, one moment, this maddening craving for repentance, coupled with the knowledge that repentance, on this side the grave, there is none—can be none: then, perhaps——"

"Go on," said James, huskily.

"Then, perhaps, you might be able to picture, as I do, what that remorse, that craving, that knowledge, would be—knowing also that you only were to blame ; that she only—your wife—had been the injured one :—and such a wife as yours is—an angel, almost!"

Again he paused ; then, suddenly, bowing his head upon the table, burst into an agony of tears.

"Oh, Gordon!"—between his terrible, passionate sobs : "I only wish to spare you what I am going through. She was beautiful . . . and so young . . . so many temptations. I might have helped her . . . taught her . . . but my coldness made her reckless ; and there is no recall. Dead . . . in the grave . . . buried . . ."

James, as he stood helplessly by, felt that this anguish was very dreadful. But what, however dreadful, asked a voice in his heart,

was this—was it not as nothing—compared with the anguish which might be: God only knew—might be: in store for himself?

* * * * *

Raynton was gone; and an irresistible impulse attracted James's steps towards the drawing-room, where Gabrielle sat alone. No—not alone: he suddenly recollect ed that two of the little Edgecumbes were spending the afternoon with her. The door was open; he heard their voices—and hers in reply. He paused in the ante-room, under the pretext of searching for a book. No such pretext, however, was needed; his approach had neither been heard nor seen by the trio in the adjoining apartment. All were engrossed in a story; one telling, the others listening. He still paused; listening also, to Gabrielle's voice.

"And so, you see, her wish was granted. She had all the happiness that she had

craved ; but somehow it did not satisfy her, or fill her heart. Still she knew it to be the greatest, brightest happiness that she could hope to find, under the sky ; beside it, every other kind seemed dry and uninteresting. Thus God had answered her prayer ; He had given her the chief earthly good."

" Had He, indeed ? You say it did not fill her heart."

" Because—as she then, for the first time, realized, no earthly good can quite fill our hearts. She had often been told this before ; and she had fancied that she believed it : just as I now tell you the same, dears, and you think that you believe me. But, most likely, you will never—any more than she —take it really in, until you learn it, as, if God spare you, you must one day learn it, for yourselves."

" So what did the poor girl do ?"

"She went again to the Angel ; and she said, ' You were right ; I feel it now ; I am made, not for earth, but for Heaven. For I have tasted the highest earthly good, and—sweet though it was—it has come short of my expectations. Now I am quite ready ; I have nothing now to keep me back. Take me to Heaven. My chief good is there.' "

"And did he take her?"

"No, not directly. He said : ' Well, I am glad you have learned that lesson. I knew you would learn it some time ; because you had asked God to teach you, and there is no teacher like God. And you shall go with me, soon ; but not yet : for, first, you have a few more lessons to learn, and a little more work to do, here.' "

"Poor girl ! How sorry she must have been ?"

"She did feel rather sorry : because she was so very tired of this weary life, and she

longed so very much to fly away to her Chief Good. But she tried to be patient, to learn quickly, and to work well; that she might get free the sooner. And she was glad that the attainment of her desire had failed to fill her heart; because otherwise she might never have been contented to leave this earth and go higher. She had not been so, you know, at first."

"No; she had cried, I remember, when the call came. She had cried, and fallen at the Angel's feet, and said, 'I cannot go.'"

"Yes.—Now she was wiser:"—The story went on; but James heard no more. His thoughts had gone back, nearly three years, to the time just before his marriage. Again he felt about his neck the clinging arms; again, the wistful voice, half smothered in sobs, exclaimed: "Oh, James, I hope I shall not die. I could not bear to leave you."

Yes ; that was Then. But Now ? What had he just heard the same voice say ?

"Now she was wiser."

And, doubtless, it was well that she should be wiser ; but whence had this sad wisdom come ? What was it that had wearied her of life ? What was it that had driven her to kneel at the gates of Heaven, knocking for a refuge—ah, from whom ? Suppose those gates should open, and receive her :—and then shut again—shut out him !

On the table lay a volume of Adelaide Procter's poetry. Hardly aware of what he did, James opened it ; and was about to close it in like manner, when his eyes were arrested by certain lines : he paused and read them. It was one of those chances—falsely so called—which sometimes, in our common, every-day life, remind us that Providence, although unseen, is an Omnipresent Fact.

“ Over an ancient scroll I bent,
Steeping my soul in wise content ;
Nor paused a moment, save to chide
A low voice whispering at my side.

“ I wove beneath the stars’ pale shine,
A dream, half human, half divine ;
And shook off (not to break the charm)
A little hand laid on my arm.

“ I read, until my heart would glow
With the great deeds of long ago ;
Nor heard, while with those mighty dead,
Pass to and fro a faltering tread.

“ On the old theme I pondered long—
The struggle between right and wrong ;
I could not check such visions high,
To soothe a little quivering sigh.

“ I tried to solve the problem—Life ;
Dreaming of that mysterious strife,
How could I leave such reasonings wise,
To answer two blue pleading eyes ?

“ I strove how best to give, and when,
My blood to save my fellow-men ;
How could I turn aside, to look
At snowdrops laid upon my book ?

“ Now Time has fled—the world is strange,
Something there is of pain and change.
My books lie closed upon the shelf ;
I miss the old heart in myself.

"I miss the sunbeams in my room—
It was not always wrapt in gloom :
I miss my dreams, they fade so fast,
Or fit into some trivial past.

"The great stream of the world goes by,
None care, or heed, or question why
I, the lone student, cannot raise
My voice or hand, as in old days.

"No echo seems to wake again
My heart to anything but pain,
Save when a dream of twilight brings
The fluttering of an angel's wings."

Thunderstruck, James closed the book. The earlier verses might have been written by himself. The "low voice" at his side—the "hand laid on his arm"—the "faltering tread passing to and fro"—the "little quivering sigh"—the "pleading eyes:"—he knew them all. And the last four verses: what if, ere long——?

He turned shuddering from the ante-room; staggered, rather than walked, out of the house: only, for the moment, conscious that he wanted air—he was half stifled; light—all seemed suddenly dark.

CHAPTER XIII.

O Laurence! O pitié! reviens, pardonne moi!

Je me croyais un Dieu! Non, je n'étais qu'un homme.
 Je maudis mon triomphe avant qu'il se consomme;
 Je me repens cent fois de ma fausse vertu.
 Ah! s'il est temps encor, Laurence, m'entends-tu?
 Je me jette à tes pieds, je t'ouvre pour la vie,
 Ces bras.

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE.

JAMES did not appear at dinner; but this was no uncommon circumstance; and Gabrielle, having dined alone, returned to the drawing-room, prepared for another link in her long series of solitary evenings. Feeling chilly, she ordered a fire; and when it was lighted, and Wilcox, retiring, had shut her in, she knelt down before it, to

enjoy for a few minutes—so far as, in these days, she could enjoy anything—its light and warmth. The few minutes were becoming many ; and she was dreamily pondering her usual occupations, with a view to choosing one :—when the door opened ; she looked round, and saw James.

“ Oh, you have got a fire,” said he ; and she noticed something unnatural, something forced, in his voice : “ That’s a good move. The evening has turned out uncommonly cold.”

He drew forward a chair, as he spoke ; and sat down, in front of the blaze.

“ You must be cold indeed ; you are so pale, James ! ” said Gabrielle, timidly : “ Have you dined ? ”

“ Don’t mention dining. The bare notion makes me sick—with this confounded headache.”

“ Does your head ache ? I am so sorry.

Please give yourself one evening's rest, and let me try to cure it."

"You, child! How can you cure it?"

His tone was rough; but beneath the roughness, Gabrielle's quick ear detected more of tenderness than he had, for long, betrayed. She gathered courage; sprang to her feet; and wheeled the most comfortable sofa in the room close to the fire. Then smoothed and arranged the pillows; and, hanging over his chair:

"James," she said: "Do come and lie down. You can't think how soft these cushions are; and really you look so very, very pale."

"Well!"—somewhat ungraciously—"perhaps I had better—: I couldn't write a line, in this state."

Rising wearily, he stretched himself full-length upon the sofa; and, much to Gabrielle's satisfaction, closed his eyes. A minute

later, however, he opened them, and found that she had slipped out of the room.

"Ah, she thinks she's done her duty, and the sooner she can escape, the better! Well —no wonder!" And he sighed heavily, as his eyes, unable to bear the light, closed once more.—But the sigh was superfluous. In another moment, she was back: by his side.

"James, I have been to fetch my eau-de-Cologne. May I put some on your forehead?"

"Oh, don't bother yourself about me. Go to your work, or whatever you like. I shall be all right, when I have lain here half an hour."

For answer, he felt on his forehead a soft, cold handkerchief, saturated with the delicious eau-de-Cologne. He could not restrain an exclamation of relief; and Gabrielle was fully rewarded. She knelt by his

side, as he still lay with closed eyes, and face turned from the light; and when, under the influence of the fever in his brow, the handkerchief grew hot, she gently removed it, substituting another—fresh and fragrant like the first.

"Is that cooler, dearest?" said this "ministering angel," as her little soft hands busied themselves in spreading it on his forehead.

"Cooler?" he cried passionately: "No. It is hot—burning hot. Coals of fire."

She understood; venturing, albeit timidly, to slide her hand into his. He took it, raised it to his lips; and then, instead of letting it go, clasped over it his other hand also, and held it fast—pressed to his heart.

Thus, for half an hour, three quarters of an hour, they remained; silent and motionless: Gabrielle, if not positively happy, at peace—forgetting the past, ignoring the future: James—ah, peace had no place with him, to judge from his contracted brow,

from the troubled lines in which his mouth was set. Outwardly he was still; but inwardly, who could tell what storms were raging?

Suddenly, Gabrielle, raising her head from the sofa-pillow, saw that his face was of an almost deathlike whiteness. He looked ill, she thought—terribly ill. She began to feel alarmed.

"James," she said, forcing her voice into calmness: "James. Is your head any better?"

"What?" he asked, rousing himself, as from a dream, and looking bewildered: "Did you speak?"

"I asked how you felt, dear—if your head were better?"

"Better?" he repeated, still dreamily: "No. It is worse. I can't imagine what has come to me. I never had such a headache before."

"Would you not like to go to bed?"

"Well, I see no use in staying here :" and he half rose.

"Stay : let me light your candle," cried Gabrielle ; but he detained her, clasped her in his arms.

"Gabrielle, why will you wait upon me?"

"Why ?—It is my duty."

"Your duty ! I see. Well—I deserve no more." He released his hold ; but she still lingered.

"And my privilege too,—and my delight : as you know, or ought to know." She looked at him reproachfully, her eyes dim.

"Gabrielle—" he said again, in a faltering voice, drawing her back : "Gabrielle, will you forgive me ?"

"Is there anything to forgive ?" said Gabrielle, gently. Then, after a moment's pause :

" You could not help growing tired of me. I told you, at first, that I could never satisfy you ; that I was not clever enough, or interesting enough, for you. I have tried to be a good wife, and to please you ; but I have failed. I think I ought not to have married you."

Her voice, though very quiet, trembled. Oh, how sharp, at this moment, were the pangs of his self-condemnation, his remorse. For the first time, he caught a glimpse of the depths of conflict, of hopelessness, into which, through him and his dire egotism, this young, lowly spirit had, for months, for years, been plunged. She had tried to be a good wife. Oh, and had she not succeeded? more than succeeded? Was it her fault that she had been repulsed, discouraged? And now, how meekly—how like an angel —she endeavoured to excuse him, to take the blame on herself!

"You could not help growing tired of me." —The words maddened him. He held her closer to his breast ; he called her his own—his darling—his most precious wife ; he told her that he never had grown tired of her—that he never could, while life remained—that the fault was his alone : that he had been a villain, a selfish, heartless, self-deceived villain : yet, if she could forgive him, only forgive him . . . He would have proceeded, but a mist obscured his eyes ; the room and his head reeled together. A deadly giddiness had seized him ; he could only fall back upon the cushions, and there lie, half conscious, till it was passed.

* * * * *

Early on the ensuing afternoon, Charlie Godfrey rode up to the Farnley door. Having rung, he waited long ; no one came ; an air of unusual stillness pervaded the

place. He rang again ; another long pause. At last, Wilcox appeared.

“ Mr. or Mrs. Gordon at home ?”

“ Yes, sir—” with portentous gravity : “ Both are at home, sir. But I have orders to admit no visitors. Master—”

He was interrupted. Flying downstairs, and across the hall, with pale cheeks and frightened eyes, came Gabrielle.

“ I was at the window—I saw you—I am so glad. Do come in.”

Hardly knowing what she did, in her breathless distress, she laid her hand upon his arm, and drew him towards the drawing-room. In the ante-room, she paused : sinking on a chair, as though all her strength were gone.

“ My dear Gabrielle, what is the matter ?”

“ Charlie, you must advize me. James”—her voice did not falter—“ James is very ill. Dr. Wallace is almost sure that he has

caught this terrible malignant scarlet-fever. For myself, I am quite sure. Ten days ago, he was at Holt's farm ; and old Holt"—her voice did falter now—"old Holt died of it yesterday."

"I know . . . so I heard," said Charlie.

"Yes. But now—I wanted your advice. What was it? let me see :" and she raised her hand to her eyes. "Oh, I remember. Charlie, Cissy is on her way here. She was to come for a long visit; to reach Rotherbridge by the 6.20 train. What am I to do? It is too late to stop her; no telegram would find her; and yet she must not enter this house. She has never had the scarlet-fever."

" You have had it yourself ?" said Charlie anxiously.

" Oh yes, long ago :—think of Cissy. What is to be done ?"

" Couldn't they take her in at the Vicarage?" said Charlie, pondering : " Or stop ; I'll

ride on at once—this minute—to Lorton. My aunt is at home ; she will be delighted, and Euphrosyne also, to have her there. I'll arrange it all : and then——”

“ Wait, Charlie—you are too quick—you puzzle me,” said poor Gabrielle, who looked as though “the burden laid upon her, was greater than she could bear :” “ And how do you know that Lady Louisa will be delighted ? Pray be careful ; I should not like you to force Cissy on her, against her will.”

“ I won’t ; I vow I won’t,” said Charlie, consolingly : “ I’ll be quite candid, come back and tell you exactly how the land lies. But now there’s no time to lose.”

He lingered, only to relieve his kindly heart, by a few hurried words of comfort ; then snatched up his hat, and rode away “on the wings of the wind.”

A few hours later, Cissy, from the window of a railway carriage, was eagerly renewing

her acquaintance with the familiar buildings, the spires and chimneys, of Rotherbridge.

"Oh dear! how homelike it all is! and how delightful to think that, in another ten minutes, I shall really be on my road to Farnley! I expect to have a good deal to do in the cheerifying line. Gabrielle's letters have had a strong savour of the Slough of Despond, lately. Poor little thing! I wonder if James neglects her? I half suspected it, last winter: though the house was so full of people, and we stayed so short a time, and she—darling! was so close on the subject, and so careful to represent him as a model of all virtue, that I could not be sure. But this time, I will watch; and——Why! there's Mr. Godfrey!"

For now the train had slowly steamed into the station; and Charlie stood on the platform, surveying first one carriage, then another, as they passed in review before him.

"Mr. Godfrey!" said Cissy, laughing, as he opened her door! "To what am I indebted, etc., etc.? Has Gabrielle sent you? and why? I can't make it out."

Then, leading her some paces aside from the throng of porters and box-hunters, he told her—a little awkwardly, but very kindly—of all that had occurred.

Which so disappointed and so confounded poor Cissy, that, much against her will, she was surprised into shedding a few irrepressible tears. Whereupon Charlie was greatly concerned, and earnestly besought her not to mind; assuring her that he was awfully sorry, that all would come right in time: and anon—wherefore, she knew not—the tears ceased, she began to smile again, and to feel greatly consoled. Then, having collected her traps, he escorted her to the carriage, placed her and her maid inside, mounted the box himself; and they drove to Lorton.

Here a warm welcome greeted her. Lady Louisa, overjoyed at this opportunity of appearing in her true character, as a ministering, a succouring angel: Lady Louisa seemed in danger of melting away,—so intense was her commiseration. Euphrosyne was no less sympathizing; but in a manner more to Cissy's taste. Ianthe and the younger girls, as always, echoed their sister. To crown all, Charlie stayed to dinner; and afterwards, while Lady Louisa—her face concealed by the flaxen ringlets—slumbered on the sofa, and the two girls sang and played with Miss Reinheldt: he established himself by Cissy's side, putting forth all his powers in the attempt to cheer her up.

And she supposed it was her sisterly anxiety that caused the thrill of delight with which, when he departed, she heard him promise to bring news of her brother, every day.

CHAPTER XIV.

A leaning and upbearing parasite,
Clothing the stem, which else had fallen quite.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

THE haughty spirit which had defied its Maker to bind it against its will, was now, as in just retribution, bound as it had never been bound before : and sent to wander in the wilderness of delirium. James lay helpless upon his bed ; that glorious forehead, at once the evidence and the shrine of the glorious intellect—God's gift, yet God's enemy—flushed with internal fever ; those eyes, worthy “windows of the soul” whom they served, weakened and closed ; those lips whence eloquence and

power had so often issued, parched, dry—yet incessantly moving to give vent to incoherent ravings.

"Gabrielle, I love you ; I cannot help it : it is my nature. But why—why—why ?"

He opened his dark eyes, and raised them appealingly to her face.

"Gabrielle—why—?"

"What is it, dearest ?" she asked, bending towards him. But he did not hear. His eyes had closed again ; he had wandered further.

"She mistook me. She thought I was tired of her. Her heart broke. She is where Raynton's wife is. He said so. Where is that ? I must—oh, I must !—If she is in Heaven, there ! If she is in Hades, there ! 'Where thou goest, I will go, and there will I—be—'"

He broke off suddenly, with a pitiful cry :

"Gabrielle—Gabrielle—"

"I am here, James." She clasped his hand ; and the cry died away.

"I will lift her in my arms ; I will carry her back. The angels shall not keep her. I was a fool. I could never—Could I ?— Could I ?"

Again he opened his eyes ; again that appealing gaze.

"No, I never could grow tired of her. She *was* 'a good wife.' She was the best of all wives—the sweetest. But the gates are shut. I cannot open them ; and no one comes. I hear her voice inside. But she does not hear me. How can I make her hear me ?—Gabrielle—Gabrielle !"

"Yes, dear ; here I am. I am with you, close to you."

Once more, for a little while, the cry ceased.

"I forgot she would be lonely. She used to come and sit behind my chair. She

never disturbed me. It was not because I had ceased to love her. It was because I loved her too much—too much.

“Why did she never complain? Why was she so patient? Why was she always so gentle and so sweet? It breaks my heart; it consumes me. I would rather she had frowned—rebelled—hated me. Why was she so patient? Why?—Was she an angel?”

He opened his eyes, and looked, with an awed, rapt wonder, far into some spiritual distance.

“Was she an angel?” he repeated, slowly: “I thought I heard ‘the fluttering of an angel’s wings.’”

He paused for a minute or so: still looking into that distance.

“In her coffin. Asleep for ever. Her eyelashes drooped on her cheek; her face was thin. They told me she was glad to—

to—Was that her voice? It came from somewhere up above. It said that someone had ceased to love her. Not I—I always loved her. But she could not know—”

Again he paused. Then, in a tone of startling clearness, rousing Olivia from a doze: “She could not look into my heart!”

“Poor fellow, how very sad this is! What is he rambling about now?” said Olivia, approaching, her eyes full of tears.

“Oh, don’t listen; it is nothing,” cried Gabrielle hurriedly: “Don’t listen. Go back to your chair—please!”

Olivia wondered, but obeyed; and Gabrielle bent low over the pillow.

“My own dearest James, I am here. I am not dead!”

“What is that to me? Gabrielle is dead. You cannot bring back Gabrielle. I thought I was rising—high—high—beyond God, even. But her heart broke.”

"Is it a glorious thing, to rise by trampling another down? To rise alone—thinking of self only. Is it? No—No—No."

"Hush, dear; try to be calm," she whispered, laying her hand upon his lips. He held it fast.

"For better, for worse—in sickness and in health—to love and to cherish, till—till—Is anything higher than God? Am I higher? They say love comes from God. Then is not love a high thing? Is not love a grand thing? Can man crush what is higher and grander than man?"

"He must be coming to himself," thought Gabrielle, "or he could not reason so!"

"James," she said, gently; but he did not answer: and, ere long, he was wandering in renewed confusion.

Thus, day after day, night after night, he lay, while she watched and listened helplessly; only, when Olivia or the nurse was

by, trying to divert their attention ; to explain away his self-reproaches, to impress upon them the exceeding wildness of his ramblings.

His life hung on a thread ; and it was impossible to decide whether or no that thread would break. Gabrielle neither hoped nor feared ; she merely existed, from hour to hour. Sometimes, indeed, came to her mind the startling, the awful question : “Is he ready to meet his God ?” But she had not courage to dwell upon it. She could only, as though her clasp would retain him, hold his feverish hand the faster : and bury her face in the pillow : and pray—and pray.

Nine days had he thus hovered between this world and the next. As the ninth night drew near, his wanderings ceased ; he fell into a heavy sleep. Gabrielle herself had, for several hours, been dropping off to sleep at intervals. Her strength was all but gone.

Still, so long as the delirium lasted, and her absence, even through that delirium so troubled him, Olivia could not persuade her to leave his side. Now, however, she yielded ; and, having begged that she might be called the instant he awoke, retired to an adjoining room : where, laying down, she also fell into a deep and dreamless slumber.

Dr. Wallace had intended to pass this night at Farnley; but, towards eleven o'clock, a messenger summoned him to a still more urgent case ; and he departed, promising to return as speedily as possible. Olivia and the nurse were left to maintain a strict watch: how strict, we need not determine. The nurse certainly dropped off, now and then ; and Olivia frequently found herself dead to everything on earth, save the difficulty of keeping her eyes open. The fire flickered dreamily ; the lamp burned low ; the heavy breathing from the bed evinced the profun-

dity of James's sleep. So the night wore on.

The clock in the passage struck two. Olivia started. She had, despite her efforts, been overcome by a doze. So, at any rate, she supposed; her senses had been wandering. She had been sitting in a nursery—long closed: and holding on her knee a little dark-eyed boy, called James. And as the clock struck, he was looking into her face, lisping some name—not her own, she thought—but a stranger's: the name of Gabrielle.

Hark! She was wide awake, now; yet the name was repeated.

“Gabrielle—are you there?”

It was James's voice; his own, his natural voice. Sunken indeed, and feeble: but the wildness was entirely gone.

“Gabrielle—are you there?”

“She is gone to lie down, dear boy. I will call her,” said Olivia, suppressing her agitation

His eyes were open ; the feverish flush had faded.

"Is that Olivia ?"

"Yes, I am here—at your side. Do not you see me ?"

"I see nothing," he answered, with an awful solemnity. "It is all dark.—Yes, call Gabrielle. I think—" the solemnity deepened—"I think I must be dying."

Pale, prepared for the worst ; yet calm,—far calmer than Olivia ; the young wife entered : stole to her place beside his pillow, bent and kissed him.

"James," she said ; "I am here."

He strained his eyes towards her. He strove, he vainly strove, to see her. He groped feebly for her hand.

"Do you want my hand, dearest ? Here it is."

He took it, held it convulsively.

"Gabrielle, there is a light in the room?"

“ Yes, dear ; a lamp.”

“ And you can see me ?”

“ Yes ; quite plainly.”

“ I cannot see you, Gabrielle. I cannot see anything. All is darkness ; the Shadow of Death.”

Olivia’s sobs thickened ; she was obliged to retire to the other end of the room. The nurse withdrew to rouse the servants, and to despatch a messenger to Dr. Wallace. But still the young, pale wife—as though upheld by some Higher Aid—remained composed and motionless. And when she spoke, her voice, in itself, brought soothing : so calm was it,—so gentle.

“ Would you like to see Mr. Edgecumbe, dear ?”

“ Presently ; not yet. Just now I want you ; only you.—Gabrielle—” once more that solemn tone—“ I did not expect to die so soon—so young.”

Again—stifling a little cry, a cry of despair—she bent and kissed him.

“That sweet, gentle, forgiving kiss——Gabrielle, I see all now. I have been selfish—bad; a wicked, cruel husband to you—my gift from Heaven.”

“Hush, dear; never mind. I know, now, that you did love me.”

“Love you? Yes. In my blindness, I thought I loved you too well. I had set up in my mind a chimerical ideal; ‘a golden image.’ I could not worship that, and you too: so you were sacrificed. For I thought only of myself; never of my marriage vows, and your loneliness—my child.”

That “My child” was too much for Gabrielle. It recalled the old days too forcibly. Those old, happy, blessed days: were they all ended? She burst into tears.

“Don’t cry; I am not worth it. Only say that you forgive me; and, if it be not too

much, that you will try to forget these last two hateful years."

"I will do anything—anything that you ask me, James." She clung to him, kissing him passionately.

"Your sweetness—your patience and goodness; they will be recompensed in Heaven :—by God—if never by me."

His voice failed, and an ashy paleness overspread his face. Gabrielle thought that the last terrible moment was come; but the nurse administered cordials, and he revived. Tightening his clasp of that thin little hand—awe in his eyes:—

"I never remembered—" he said—"that I could Die."

Then—in a tone which seemed to pierce the hearts of the watchers:

"Where shall I go? . . . What shall I be? . . . When my eyes are opened, what shall I see?"

Ah, what? Who could answer? Who, of all that people the earth? Who, of all the wise men, the mighty thinkers?

"I thought Reason omnipotent; but Reason fails me here. Science—philosophy—all fails. All is nothing: less than nothing. So am I."

He trembled—he so strong, so proud!

"James, dearest—" whispered the sweet voice of his good angel, at his side: "Think of our Saviour. He will not fail."

"I cannot, Gabrielle. It is too late."

"It is never, never, James, too late to pray."

"Gabrielle, I have rebelled too long. I dare not pray."

"Then—" said she—"I will."

And still clinging to him, with the passionate clasp that, in itself, seemed an appeal to the All-Merciful; still holding fast his hand; her tears still wet on his forehead: she—

this young, weak being whom, in his pride of intellect, he had deemed so far below him,—lifting her voice in the silent room, through the darkness which encompassed him ; led, as himself he could not lead, him, the powerful philosopher, the self-sufficient : to the foot of the Cross.

CHAPTER XV.

Thank God, who made me blind, to make me see.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

"**C**ISSY!" exclaimed Euphrosyne Pembroke, bursting into the room where Cissy, somewhat pensively, sat—professing to read: "Can you come downstairs? Charlie wants to speak to you; and I am sure he has brought good news."

"What makes you sure?" cried Cissy, starting up.

"Oh! his manner. I asked him to tell me, that I might tell you; but no: he said that he must tell you himself."

They were at the drawing-room door, by this time; and it was doubtless to the speed

of their descent, that the heightened colour on Cissy's cheeks was owing: as Charlie—who was found pacing the room, with no slight degree of impatience—advanced to meet her.

"I have glorious news for you. Your brother is really on the mend. Wallace has pronounced him out of danger."

"Is that all?" cried the naïve Euphrosyne. Then—as both looked at her, astonished—blushing, and hastening to explain.

"I did not mean—it was only—I thought this piece of news must be very particular indeed. Charlie seemed so wonderfully anxious to tell you himself."

"And is it not very particular indeed?" said Charlie, smiling, though with something of embarrassment: "Here's a note—" he added, turning again to Cissy—"from Miss Gordon. She was on the point of sending it by a servant, when I called, and volunteered to save him the walk."

" You will stay to dinner, Charlie ?" said Euphrosyne, as Cissy tore open the envelope, and proceeded to devour its contents.

" Well, I don't know. Euphrosyne, come with me ; I want to see the new croquêt set."

Drawing her hand through his arm, he manœuvred her—very cleverly, Cissy thought—out of Cissy's way.

And he did stay to dinner.

" Farnley, Thursday afternoon.

" MY DEAREST CISSY,

" I have not time, and am too tired besides, to write more than a few lines ; but the day must not pass without your hearing the joyful news that our beloved James is, humanly speaking, out of danger. To us who have been with him, this borders on a miracle ; for last night, the night of the crisis, we all thought that he was dying. He, poor fellow, was in terrible distress of

mind ; as so many of our best and greatest have been, in similar circumstances :—the best, dear Cissy, are ever the humblest. I will not dwell upon this ; but will only say that, dearly as I have loved Gabrielle, never, till then, was I conscious of her true worth. She was the strongest of us all ; how I wish you could have seen her—yes, and heard her ! but I must postpone details. I think it was her presence that soothed him, at last, into a tranquil sleep : from which he only awoke at ten o'clock this morning,—the crisis past, the fever gone. It has left him ; of course, deplorably weak ; but his constitution is so vigorous, that, with common care, Dr. Wallace foresees no difficulty in bringing him round. There is only one drawback—a dreadful one : I have not dared, as yet, to suggest it to Gabrielle. He is, at present, quite blind ; and Dr. Wallace fears that the optic nerve may have

sustained—as, in these malignant fevers, is not unusual—some irreparable injury. At first—last night's horror fresh in my mind—I felt that nothing, so long as his life were spared, could materially afflict us. But when I try to realize—however, I will write, and, if possible, think no more, of this calamity, now. ‘Sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof.’

“Poor darling Gabrielle has not escaped the natural re-action from what I must call her supernatural calmness and self-command. I am writing beside her sofa; Dr. Wallace insists on her spending one day of entire rest: and she is now lying in a dreamy state, half awake, half asleep; and looking—poor dear child—far less fit for this world, than for the next. I fear James misses her sadly; but he is very patient; and I trust that she will have full time to gather in a stock of strength for whatever may be to

come. James blind!—but I dare not dwell on this; and my time is gone: so good-bye, dear Cissy.

“By-the-by, pray remember your goloshes; and if you should be caught in the rain, at any time, be sure to take some camphor.

“Believe me always,

“Your affectionate sister,

“OLIVIA.

“P.S.—Mr. Godfrey has just called, and begs so politely to be allowed to carry this letter, that I have consented, though somewhat against my will:—I object, on principle, to riding a willing horse to death.”

* * * * *

Dr. Wallace's suspicions, Olivia's fears, were too surely realized. James came up from the gates of death, bearing with him one lasting memorial of all that he had learned and suffered there; one ineffaceable

stamp : the stamp of blindness. He never saw, with mortal eyes, again.

All that could be done, was done ; but all failed. Two celebrated oculists came from London ; this, however, merely to satisfy Olivia and Gabrielle : for Dr. Wallace, even while summoning them, knew well, that, in this case, celebrity was useless. The optic nerve was, as he had feared, irreparably injured. There was no visible defect. The bright, dark, beautiful eyes were still as bright, as dark, as beautiful as ever. The gifted soul still lightened them from within ; but they no longer lightened the soul.

It was long before anyone could summon courage to inform James of this—it could not but be called—terrible trial. At last, Olivia, having screwed up her fortitude to an elevated pitch, proposed to take the painful task upon herself. But Gabrielle declined. She alone, she had from the be-

ginning determined, must apprise her husband of what she feared he would regard as a death-blow to his hopes of fame.

One afternoon—a still, melancholy, November afternoon—he was sitting, very pale, very weak, very thin, in Gabrielle's dressing-room. She had been reading the leading article to him, in a voice which, every now and then, faltered, and threatened to die away. She was glad when she had finished, and could lay the paper down, drawing her seat a little nearer to his, and resting her head upon his shoulder. Somehow, this seemed to nerve her; to give her strength for the undertaking which, now that he was so far recovered, she had resolved must be postponed no longer.

"You are out of spirits, this afternoon, Gabrielle. Tired?" said he, at last; while his eyes by instinct sought her face: and rested on it.

"No, I am not tired, thank you."

"Then you are not well ;—something is the matter. I wish—" he burst out, with his old vehemence—"I wish this confounded blindness—" Then, suddenly checking himself, and subduing his tone : "When does Wallace expect my eyes to be right again ?"

"I am afraid—not for a very long time," began Gabrielle; then stopped. Her manner struck him : gave form to a vague dread which had, during several days, been hovering in his own mind.

Pale as he was before, he now became paler : then flushed, to the roots of his hair.

"Gabrielle, you are concealing something. Don't be afraid. Tell me the worst. I can bear it."

Still she paused ; articulation failed her.

"This blindness is likely to last some time ? Years perhaps ?"

Still that silence. His agitation increased.

"Those fellows who came over with Wallace ; they were oculists, I suppose. What did they advize, Gabrielle ? What did they say ?"

"They said—oh, James ! it is a heavy trial . . . but we must bear it—" Her voice broke.

He had a shade over his eyes. It was a pretence merely ; placed there—as now he saw—to baffle his suspicions. Passionately, with trembling hands, he tore it from him ; flung it to the other end of the room.

"Am I a child"—said he hoarsely—"that they should humbug me like this ?"

Then he sat speechless ; his arms folded.

"James!"—He felt Gabrielle's kisses and tears together on his face ; heard, close at his ear, her eager voice, struggling through sobs : "James—I will see for you. I will write for you—read for you—everything.

You shall lose nothing—that I can supply. And perhaps . . . though, at first, it seems so hard . . . perhaps, in time, you may be able to feel resigned."

"I am resigned now," he answered, with a strange, fixed calmness: "I am resigned. I acknowledge that it is just."

"How do you mean, James?"

He sat immovable, his arms still folded.

"I defied God, my Creator, to bind me against my will. Now I see what His power is; and what mine is. Yes, Gabrielle;—He has humbled me, and it is just."

"But you shall be humbled no more than I can help—dearest!" She had never loved him so much; he had never seemed to her so truly noble: as now.

"It will not humble you to be waited on by me—a part of yourself?"

"Will it not? Yes, to the dust. I am not worthy that the same roof should cover us. Suppose we had both died, the week

before last. You would be in Heaven, now; and I——”

“Ah, James!”—A fearful shudder convulsed her whole frame; he felt it, as she clung to him.—“Ah, James—don’t. I cannot bear it.”

“My child, I won’t. I won’t do or say anything to vex you, any more, to my life’s end—that I can help. But you need not wonder if the blindness seem almost a trifle to me, after—and yet——”

He paused; for, as he spoke, came realization: belying his words.

“Yet—never to see again. Never again . . .”

Once more—long—long—he paused.

Then, slowly, as striving to take it in:

“Never again the woods . . . the fields . . . the sun . . . my books . . . your face, Gabrielle . . .”

Gropingly, uncertainly, he put out his arms; drew his little comforter to his breast: and they wept together.

CHAPTER XVI.

How little we know ! when I thought that I,
Like a helmless ship, was cast
On the hard, bleak rocks of some desert coast,
God was guiding me, sure and fast,
Leading me home by wonderful ways,
To a blessed haven at last.

ELIZABETH D. CROSS.

THE second week in December witnessed a general *réunion* at Farnley. James, Gabrielle, and Olivia, returned, after a month at Hastings; and on the following day, were joined by Cissy: who had been making a little tour of visits among her Yorkshire friends. James and Olivia were out when she arrived; and Gabrielle alone was waiting to receive her: of which arrangement Cissy highly approved. The

cousins were speedily seated, side by side, upon the crimson sofa in that cosy little room which had been Olivia's room in former days—and which still retained its name.

"Well, dear! you have gone through a good deal, since we met last," said Cissy: all preliminaries of small talk and small pieces of information, having been duly interchanged.

"I have indeed," replied Gabrielle, with a sigh: "And so has poor James."

"James! ah, well—" Cissy stopped abruptly. She had been about to add—"James deserved it."

"He is quite well again, now," went on Gabrielle, not seeming to notice either the exclamation or the pause: "And, in time, I trust he may grow more accustomed to this dreadful blindness."

"It is dreadful!" said Cissy, shuddering.

"Yes; and he bears it so well. He is so

patient—never complains. I believe—" and she coloured—"I believe, Cissy, you will see a great change in him, in more ways than one. You used to think him conceited. ("A mild way of stating the case!" thought Cissy) But now his failings are all on the other side. He is sometimes so despairing about himself, and his own deficiencies: he sinks quite down into the depths."

"And then, I suppose, you haul him up again. What would he do without you?"

"He does call me his comfort—" Gabrielle acknowledged, smiling: "But now, Cissy, I want to hear about yourself. How have you been getting on? Do tell me—outwardly and inwardly."

"Outwardly, much as usual," said Cissy, looking remarkably sober.

"But inwardly? Cissy, I am sure you are unhappy. I saw it directly you came."

And in her old caressing way, she nestled

to Cissy's side. Cissy hesitated for a moment: then burst into an impetuous and a truly Cissy-like fit of crying.

"Oh, Gabrielle, Gabrielle, your prophecy is fulfilled! My soul has come—and"—a gulp—"and a great bore it is!"

Gabrielle bit her lip to repress a smile; but Cissy sobbed on, none the wiser.

"Ever since I left Farnley, it has been growing. That horrid Brierley Lodge has been sea-air to it; and all my bothers there —my longings for home, etcetera—were its tonics. And lately—but never mind details; the result's enough. I've got a soul, a heart, like other people, now; and it will never go away; and I shall never, never, Never be happy again."

"Why, Cissy! What can make you think so?" said Gabrielle, distressed: as the pretty head sank lower, and the tears coursed each other like rain-drops, over the

piquante face : “Your journey has tired you.”

At this Cissy started up ; dashed the tears away ; and laughed spasmodically.

“ You have caught Olivia’s complaint, I declare ! I was never less tired in my life. But never mind—I won’t make myself ridiculous. They will be coming home directly ; and Olivia shan’t find me with red eyes. Talk, Gabrielle ! Chatter ! Gesticulate !—anything to keep my horrid soul from spouting out its tears, like this :—as though it were proud of them, forsooth, and wished to show them off. I have no patience with it. Come, Gabrielle ! Talk ! Fire away !”

“ Oh, by-the-by : I have heard nothing about your Lorton visit. Was Lady Louisa—”

“ Lady Louisa ! Don’t mention her, just now, dear. My emotion has made me feel a tiny bit sick ; and that might help it on. Besides—‘ Speak well of the bridge that

carries you over : next door to which, in my *morale*, comes : ‘ If you can’t speak well of it, don’t speak at all of it.’ So, if you please, I won’t speak at all of the esteemed Lady Louisa.”

“ Well, then—Charlie. Are you and he as good friends as ever ? ”

“ If by ‘ Charlie,’ you mean Mr. Godfrey; we are not,” said Cissy, fiercely : “ I have taken a violent dislike to him. In fact, I may say that I hate him—more than anyone in the world.”

“ Why ! has he offended you ? ” said Gabrielle, half puzzled, half amused.

“ Not particularly. One can’t account for one’s prejudices. One can only feel them. And I feel that . . . I hate Mr. Godfrey.”

Upon this, Cissy burst into a second fit of crying, more violent than the first. It was shorter, however ; and soon, with a passionate little stamp, she took out her handker-

chief, dried her tears resolutely—then threw herself into Gabrielle's arms.

"Gabrielle, don't think me a downright idiot! It is all my provoking soul. When I've had it longer, I shall manage it better; but, at present, it manages me."

Gabrielle kissed her soothingly; and was about to answer: when, with a sudden start—

"Hark!" she said: "There is James!"

Then, in the hall, Cissy heard a step: slow, uncertain; and at the door a hand, feeling, as in darkness, for the lock. Gabrielle sprang forward.

"Why are you alone? I thought Olivia was with you."

"She got out at the lodge, to see the sick child. Is Cissy here?"

He was in the room, by this time, leaning on his wife. James—as tall, as handsome, as athletic-looking as ever. How strange

it seemed that he should be leaning thus upon that frail young shoulder! that he should ask—gazing full in his sister's direction—“Is Cissy here?”

“Yes, Cissy is here. Take care, darling—let me move this footstool. Now it is all clear,” said Gabrielle.

She guided him to the sofa : beside which Cissy, with misty eyes, had stood watching that sorrowful entrance.

“Well, Cissy!” He stooped and kissed her—tenderly, but sadly. His whole manner, his whole air, was saddened ; and more—it was humbled. Cissy felt that, after all, she loved him dearly : this high-and-mighty brother of hers.

“I am glad to see you looking so well, James,” she said gently, as he sat down. Her heart was full ; but nothing beyond this common-place observation, could find a way out of it.

"Thank you, Cissy. I am glad to see you"—he corrected himself—"to find you here. You must stay a long time, to make up for the visit of which I was so stupid as to rob you ; and I hope you will do Gabrielle good."

"I wish I could do *you* good, I know—you dear, darling boy," cried Cissy, suddenly springing on him, with her vehement hug ; "I've been a nasty, horrid, odious Termagant; but you must forgive it ; and I'll do my best to make you forget it. I'll never termagantize again : no, never no more."

"I wish I could venture to say that I would domineer no more ; but I feel I'm not to be depended on," returned James, still sadly, though he smiled : "However, Cissy, we'll make a compact :—'Bear and forbear,' on both sides."

Thus, while Gabrielle, well pleased, looked on, a lasting peace was established between

this brother and sister : who, for so long, had lived in tacit enmity.

An hour later—the others having vanished, their respective ways—Cissy was sitting alone : or rather, she was on her knees alone, hugging Gipsy : when the swinging of the door, and Wilcox's stentorian "Mr. Godfrey !" caused her to start—and rise, with heightened colour.

Poor Cissy ! to find herself *tête-à-tête* with this obnoxious being—the very Mr. Godfrey whom, as she had told Gabrielle, she hated more than any one in the world ! However, since he was here, and no help for it—she must be civil. So she advanced, with a very pretty little smile ; said, " How do you do, Mr. Godfrey ?" allowed him to take her hand, and to press it, holding it somewhat longer than was needful : finally invited him to be seated..

"I expected to find you here," he said, accepting the invitation.

"Did you? I only came this afternoon.—Gipsy! get down."

"How is your brother?—and Gabrielle?"

"Thanks; James is pretty well, poor fellow.—Gabrielle—she is pretty well too, I think. You will like to see her;" and Cissy rose: but he placed himself in her way, his manner strangely eager.

"Don't go—Wilcox will tell her—please stop. I want—I have scarcely seen anything of you. Do sit down again. How long do you mean to stay at Farnley?"

"A month, I believe."

"Not longer?" His countenance fell. "I have to go away myself, the day after to-morrow; and I shan't get back under five weeks, I fear: so I shall quite miss your visit."

"I suppose you are going abroad with

your cousin?" said Cissy, bending over Gipsy: and swallowing once or twice, to repress an inclination to cry.

"Yes: I promised my uncle. It would never do to disappoint them now. Otherwise—" Charlie paused, looking down on the carpet.

"And when I return, you will really be gone? all the way back to—"

"My beloved Brierley Lodge," concluded Cissy, smiling.

Another pause, long and embarrassing. Then—raising his eyes from the carpet to Cissy's face, and there fixing them, with an expression beneath which her own eyes sank:—

"Miss Gordon"—he said: "Do you remember a time, more than three years ago, when I was awfully down in the mouth, and we—you and I—were coming in from a long talk in the park here? Just as we

parted, you said—‘Cheer up’—or something to that effect—

‘The darkest day,
Wait till to-morrow will have passed away.’

Do you remember that?”

“I think I do,” replied Cissy, in a scarcely audible voice.

“An hour before, my own day had seemed darker than I can tell you. But when you said that, I felt as though a sunbeam had come glinting across it. And it has been as you said. The to-morrow has dawned ; and the dark day to which you referred, has passed quite away : and the sunbeam”—he seized her hand—“the sunbeam has spread into a flood of light, and is filling my life. I needn’t try to shut it out, Cissy—need I ? It depends on you.”

He paused, earnestly watching her. She made no answer ; but she did not withdraw her hand.

“Cissy, if you will trust yourself to me, I will do my best to take care of you, and to make you happy. I love you with all my heart.”

“And I believe,” said Cissy: for the first time—half shyly—returning his glance:—“I believe (though I’ve not had one very long, so don’t know much about it) that, with a little bit of mine, I . . . like you.”

The immediate sequel of this confession, deponent recordeth not. But when Gabrielle, who had been detained upstairs, descended, she found that Cissy, by some mysterious inconsistency, had bestowed herself—as property unalienable and unredeemable—on the person whom she hated more than any one in the world!

CHAPTER XVII.

"At last he raised himself a little, again listened, and then said : 'It is over. The sound of the bells is very sweet. We have overcome.'"

Translated from the Baron De La Motte Fouqué.

JAMES sat alone at his writing-table. His head was bowed upon his arms ; beneath them, lay a sheet of foolscap—whereon, running one into the other, were traced a few illegible and blotted lines. At a little distance, as though he had flung it impatiently from him, was a pen : in which the ink had dried, forming a thick black crust.

Suddenly—hearing the door open, and a light footstep enter—he raised his face. It was worn, flushed, depressed.

"Is that Gabrielle?"

"Yes; I thought you were lost. What have you been doing? Writing?" She leaned over his shoulder, attempting to decipher the blotted lines.

"I tried to write," he said, hopelessly: "The ideas were crowding on my mind. But it is of no use. I shall never be good for anything, any more:" and he heaved a great sigh.

Gabrielle, however, did not sigh. This was a moment for which she had long been on the watch.

"James—" said she, still leaning on his shoulder—"I think I ought really to stick to you from morning till night; for whenever you are left to yourself, you sink into the Slough of Despond. One might think, to hear you talk, that you had lost your intellect, instead of your eyesight?"

"It is much the same," said James, despondingly.

"Oh, James! Remember all the great men who have been blind. Why, Homer was blind—and Huber—and Milton—and Eusebius; and a host besides. You can't do the manual part, certainly:—though even that may come, in time. But you know, Philip has heard of a promising secretary, and Mr. Morris's old cottage is nearly ready for him; and he will very soon be here: and you will have his eyes and his fingers, to use as you like."

"Ten to one, I shall find them as much plague as profit! There are all manner of books which I am obliged to refer to, and to read:—or rather, *was* obliged—" another great sigh: "And unless he's thoroughly *au fait* of the kind of thing—— Then I must suit my time, more or less, to his. I can no longer work by fits and starts, whenever the mood falls on me. . . . Oh, Gabrielle!" resting his head against her, as

she sat on the arm of the chair—"Sometimes I am tempted to feel, like Cain, that my punishment is greater than I can bear. This state of dependence is galling to a degree!"

"Yes, dearest—I know!" Somehow it seemed less galling as she spoke: "But—James, don't call me conceited—I have set my heart on being your chief secretary myself. You see I shall be always at your beck and call; and I shall so enjoy reading what you want, to you—looking through the books, and—"

"My dearest child, almost all the books—for the century that I am about now—are in Latin."

"Well, James—" with a touch of pride—"What of that? I understand Latin; pretty well, at least—well enough to make notes for the secretary, under your directions."

"You understand Latin, Gabrielle?"

"I have been working at it, hard, these two years. I hoped that, some time, if I learned it, I might be able to help you."

"These two years! While I was behaving like a blackguard to you, you were drudging away at Latin for me!—Well, never mind. I am contented, now, to be unworthy of you."

"A very improper state of mind, James. And now, suppose we set to work? I am quite ready."

"How do you mean?"

"You said that the ideas were crowding on your mind. May I not write for you at once? Only, first, if you know of any books that we shall want, I'll go and hunt them out of the library."

"Stop one minute, my child. Come nearer." He drew her nearer; and laid his hand upon her head. Then, in a voice that faltered more than a little:

"God bless thee—" he said: "And God requite thee!—for I cannot."

* * * * *

"Well!" said Mr. Morris, wiping his spectacles; the better to gaze at Charlie, with the dreamy yet affectionate gaze of old; "Well! so you've fixed the day? What is it?"

"The eighteenth of June. The jolliest time of all the year! And we've fixed the place too; the places, rather: first the English lakes, then the Scotch lakes, and home by Edinburgh."

"A happy coming home may it be, my boy! Well—! Glad. Very glad. And thankful to have such an account"—his tone sank, while his eyes wandered from Charlie's face to the glass of roses on the table—"such an account to take *her*."

"Would you like to hear Cissy's letter?—part of it, at least—" said Charlie, his cheek flushing.

It was a journal letter ; long, bright, and joyous—fully corroborating Charlie's simile of the sunbeam ; and it ended thus :

“ You remember my favourite theory,—that we are formed to be happy ? Even Brierley Lodge, you know, and its stagnations, have failed to crush that faith in me. And now it is established more firmly than ever. I am sure—quite sure—that it is true.”

“ It is true,” said Mr. Morris, who had listened attentively : with a smile half-amused, half-melancholy : “ It is true. Tell her so. We are formed to be happy. But—not in this life : in the life to come.”

“ I fancy 'tis chiefly this life that she means here,” said Charlie, smiling.

“ Yes, and even in this, we have glimpses—foretastes of what is coming. At least, some have ; you and she, for instance. And very pleasant is it to those denied them, or

past them, to see them thus, in others. But they're liable to fade again. Tell her so. Only in the life immortal will God say : 'Be ye glad and rejoice for ever.' "

" You must talk these things over with Cissy, when she comes," said Charlie, reverentially.

" Ah ! she'll learn for herself. Never fear. Gradually, bit by bit, she, and you—all in the right school—will learn all. As for me"—and, mechanically, his dim eyes turned towards the western sky : " As for me, my holidays are fast approaching. It has been long—hard—the lessons difficult ; but all for the best. Looking back, I see it. All for the best."

He was lost in a dream ; and Charlie, who had parochial work to do, thought it a good opportunity to slip away. He walked forth into the village ; his step elastic, and his heart bounding. Never, it seemed to

him, had the voices of the children at their play, sounded so merrily ; never had the spring birds sung so sweetly ; never had the hedges, the trees, just bursting into bloom, so testified of life, of hope : as to-day.

He was detained for some time among his cottages : and the “richest, tenderest glow” of a glorious sunset, was fading, when he re-entered the Rectory grounds. Through the window of Mr. Morris’s study, Charlie saw the rugged figure, seated, as usual, in the arm-chair ; and before him, spread open, the voluminous manuscript of the Introduction to a Treatise on the Ten Missing Tribes. A pen was in his hand ; but he was not writing. His head was bowed upon his chest ; his spectacles were slipping from over his eyes : he had evidently been overcome by a doze.

Charlie, unwilling to disturb him, passed the room without entering ; and went quiet-

ly upstairs to dress. The dinner-bell surprised him, before he was ready. He hurried his operations, and ran down at the pace of a schoolboy.

The dining-room, however, was tenantless. Charlie opened the study door. There, his back turned, Mr. Morris still sat. This doze was uncommonly heavy !

"Are you ready for dinner?" asked Charlie.

There was no answer.

The young man approached the chair ; and, standing behind it, saw that, at length —on this very afternoon—the Introduction had been completed.

"Even so"—ran the final sentence—"may we hope that a day will come, when these lost ones will be re-assembled ; when He Who gathereth together the outcasts of Israel, will gather them : and reunite them, in one Home, each to each—to part no more."

Suddenly, by an indefinable impulse, Charlie stooped, and looked into the old

man's face. It was very peaceful, very calm ; but it was also colourless and lifeless. This sleep—so prolonged, so still—was the sleep of death.

They carried him upstairs, and laid him on his bed, facing westward. And through the closed blinds, evening by evening, during the solemn week that followed, the rays which he had loved, stole in, and hovered round him, as he lay so quietly; his conflicts ended at last. Charlie mourned for him, as a son mourns for a father ; and when he was laid in his coffin, a spray of roses was laid by Charlie's hand upon his breast.

Later, a marble cross was erected in Meddiscombe churchyard ; with an inscription bearing the name of Brian Morris, his age, and the date of his death. And below, a verse :

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Thus the Ten Missing Tribes are missing still !

CHAPTER XVIII.

He who will be wiser than his Maker, is but seeming wise. He who will deaden one half of his nature, to invigorate the other half, will become at best a distorted prodigy.—JAMES STEPHEN.

Nothing useless is or low,
Each thing in its place is best ;
And what seems but idle show,
Strengthens and supports the rest.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

JUNE—the second June after Mr. Morris's death—was opening brightly. The soft gray haze, in the early mornings; the long hot days that followed; the dewy evenings, so fragrant and so still: all gave promise of an ideal summer. Wild roses abounded in the hedges; thrushes and linnets in the woods; the meadow grass, almost ready for cutting, scented the air

like hay: and the usual swarm of heat-rejoicing insects—gnats, dragon-flies, bees—maintained a continuous drowsy murmur.

Towards the close of one of the most radiant of these radiant days, James sat at the chapel organ, playing the Benedictus of Beethoven's Mass in C. And while he played, his upturned face, and expression of rapt attention, showed that he was also listening, drinking in the sounds, as though another were the performer.

Finishing at length, with a half sigh, he was conscious of a hand upon his shoulder, and a voice exclaiming :

“ Oh, James! I wish it were not done. I could hear it for ever.”

He smiled ; and turned round on his seat.

“ So you are back at last? How long you stayed !”

“ Did you miss me, dear? I hope not. I came away as soon as possible, after tea. I

have been at home some time ; only I went straight upstairs, to get my dressing over, before joining you. I heard the organ, so felt sure you were happy."

" And how about your dinner ?"

" Oh, severe teas are the fashion at Meddiscombe, you know ; Olivia, Charlie, and I had a very cosy one together. But, James —you don't ask after the baby. Such a duck !"

" You forget what a full description you gave me yesterday. I suppose his duckishness is not materially increased since then ?"

" I don't know. Cissy declares that he grows sweeter every hour ! Gipsy is quite superannuated ; and as for Spitfire—she is sure that she will never care to look at him again."

" Well, come out on the terrace, and tell me all about everything," said James, rising.
" It seems sheer waste, on such an evening,

to spend an hour more in the house than one can help."

"So it does, James. I congratulate you on your good taste. Take care! the door is only half open."

"All right. I am quite an adept now, in the way of doors. Bring a cloak, Gabrielle.—"Oh!"—as they emerged into the outer world—"How sweet the air is! hay and jessamine mingled. What are the stars like?"

"Only two or three are to be seen, as yet. The sunset is hardly over; a few streaks—crimson and purple in a lake of pale green—are left still. Shall we sit down here, James?"

"Yes; and I vote we don't move till we are obliged; so make yourself comfortable. Here—lean against me." He drew her to his side, as he spoke; not with the vehement clasp of old, but with the tenderness—calm though deep—of settled, unchangeable

love. And Gabrielle nestled up to him as a little bird nestles under the wing of its mother; as a child, in perfect confidence, resigns itself to the haven of its father's arms.

"So Cissy is very happy with her baby?"

"Oh, yes. And, James, you should see the pride of Charlie in his son and heir! Dear Charlie—he deserves to be happy, doesn't he?"

"He does indeed. And Olivia? We shall get her here, I hope?"

"I extorted a promise of at least a fortnight. You can't think, James, how bright and cheerful she looks; and she is so comfortable at Enderby. Philip and Annie, she says, and the children, declare that they could never get on, now, without her. She has her own sitting-room, in a quiet part of the house; and altogether, she confesses that she is happier than, in this world, she ever expected to be."

"That's pleasant to think of. And how about the child's name?"

"Cissy's child? They talk of Charles Gordon. Do you know—is it not strange?—Charlie says that he would rather have had a girl."

"Well—a girl will come, some day, no doubt."

"Yes; as I tell Cissy, I am looking forward to six children, at least, of hers, to pet—boys and girls both. By-the-by, James, as I drove to Meddiscombe—in that very narrow lane—I heard a clatter of wheels and a clatter of voices; so I pulled the ponies almost into the ditch: And what do you think rushed past? A very smart wagonette, with Lord Joseph Postlethwaite and two red-headed little boys—twins, I fancy—upon the box. And, behind, looking sadly uncomfortable, poor The—so faded and pale! a fat little girl upon her lap, an-

other at her side, and a nurse opposite, with a baby."

"What a tribe! I wonder how she likes it."

"Cissy, who knows all about her, says, not at all. She is quite over-done, and declares that her married life has been one continual worry, and press of 'brats.' Lord Joseph, who is as obstinate as obstinate can be——"

(“Like most foo—men of his genus.”)
“insists on taking his children about with him, always. So The is never free.”

“Well—she has brought it on herself, poor thing! I am sorry for her; but thankful—so thankful—that I escaped her. Gabrielle—” and he drew her closer—“How much I have escaped, when I deserved to escape nothing! How wonderfully, in spite of myself, I have been guided—I can call it nothing less.”

"Yes," she answered gently, looking towards the stars: "I was thinking to-day—recapitulating the last few years. It seems to me that a Mind higher than our own, has certainly been with us."

"Do you recollect on our wedding-day, my prayer that God would bless you, and in you, your husband, for ever?"

"Yes, I recollect; and how it seemed to sanctify my joy."

"As for me, it has sanctified my whole life. God has answered that prayer. He is answering it still. He has blessed thee, and thy husband in thee.—Yes, Gabrielle—in thee."

"Dearest, there is something else that I should like you to remember. One day, when you had accused me—as you did, sometimes—of coldness; I told you that it was not in me, to express my love as you expressed yours; but that, if ever an oppor-

tunity were given me, of bearing something, of doing something, for you, you would see that the love was there. And inwardly I prayed that such an opportunity might come. James, it has come. You do not think me cold, now?"

"I think that your warmth was the warmth of Heaven, my darling—and mine, the warmth of earth."

"Oh, James!—but I won't try to answer you. One thing more:—you know how heavy a trial I felt it, once, to have no children? Well! since your blindness, I have almost been glad of it. If we had children, I should be obliged to devote a good deal of time and thought to them; as it is, I am free to devote all to you—to

. . . . 'Serve you, live for you,
Yours and yours only be.'

Yes, James—I can look up and thank God for withholding from me everything—everything earthly—that might divide my

heart with you; that might prevent my spending my whole life, and every power in my life, under Him, for you alone."

"Gabrielle, my child, when you talk so, I can hardly bear it—or myself."

"How do you mean, James?"

"All the time, I think—What am I, that I should hold a being so unselfish, so pure, so devoted, to my heart—*mine*—and call her my wife?"

As he spoke, he relaxed his clasp; but she only crept the closer—close as she well could—to that same heart which, unworthy as it deemed itself, was yet her highest earthly glory.

"James, don't—" she whispered: "Don't fancy all that of me; it is not true. We have both much to learn, far to climb; we will help one another, bear with one another—as God helps and bears with us: and so rise together."

He stooped, and kissed her reverently. After a pause—in a low, rather dreamy voice, as though that last speech had roused some inward reminiscence—he said :

“ Gabrielle, a few hours ago, as I sat alone, the past arose before me ; and this is what I saw.

“ I saw a young boy, just awaking to a consciousness of his own powers ; to a conviction that they were no common powers ; and that his path in life must be no common path—but one far above the common.

“ I saw him, led by that ambition, become, by degrees, a proud, apparently a stoical, philosopher : isolating himself in spirit, and resolving, that to himself alone should be the glory of the success which he regarded as certain.

“ I saw him, thus inflamed by the fire of self-worship, choose his own way, and pursue it : despising every external aid, whether of

God or of man. I saw him, guided solely by the light in his own breast, erect a standard, and press towards it: never asking if it were a true standard, or a false one —because so to ask, would be to confess that he was not, as he had resolved to be, in all things sufficient to himself.

“And then I saw—oh, Gabrielle—the mercy of God!—I saw an angel appear in his way; a messenger from Heaven:—who, before he was aware, took his hand, and held it so fast, that he could not withdraw it. Fair, and sweet, and pure, that little messenger was: but, because the path in which she would lead him, was not the path that he himself had chosen; because it was a path in which other men, common men, were going; above all, because—she holding his hand—he was no longer independent: therefore he resisted, he rebelled, he struggled to get free.

"I saw that, in these struggles, this rebellion, she, that tender little guide of his, was often wounded—hurt and bruised. He did not consider—perhaps he did not care—how, so his own proud will were gratified, she whom God had sent to him, suffered. Regardless of her entreaties, of her wistful eyes, of her clinging hand, he wrestled continually; but he could not unloose the clasp. Still, in spite of himself, she drew him on; still, fast—fast—she held him.

"Suddenly her wings fluttered; and he thought that she was about to spread them, to fly away. And then he saw that she was bleeding; that he had wounded her: her—so sweet, so patient. In the same moment, came upon him, an agony of remorse; and he thought,—'Better even that my high aims should perish, than that she should suffer thus! I will resign myself; I will struggle no more; since struggling gives her pain.'

"Then—even at that instant—the scales fell from his eyes; and he saw all things anew. He saw that the path where she would guide him, led to heights more sublime than any to which his own path led. That—whereas he had considered it a mark of greatness to rise alone—God, from whom he proceeded, has decreed, that only in unison with his fellows; in helping and in being helped: can man rise. That, to despise the natural affections implanted within us, is to despise, as it were, a ladder, by which we might climb from the natural to the supernatural, from the human to the Divine. That, since in ourselves alone, lies no power to help ourselves; our truest wisdom consists, not in scorning, but in using, all things—small as well as great things—which might tend to raise that ladder nearer to the region of perfect light. Chiefly—since, when all this is done, man,

even at his best, is still so impotent, so short-sighted—that he who truly wishes to know the truth, will commit himself, as a little child, to God: to be taught and guided.

“Moreover: that, while Intellect is a grand thing, and Morality a grand thing, Love is grander than either. Because, without Love, Morality is cold, and Intellect is weak. Because Love supplies all deficiencies; reconciles all differences; unites the high and the low, the strong and the feeble, the rich and the poor, mentally and physically—into one glorious fellowship. Because, although Intellect and Morality are, equally with Love, God's offspring, Love is more than His offspring—it is His nature: for we are told that ‘God is Love.’

“All this, Gabrielle, he saw—that man: and do you know how it was that he saw it?—how it was that the scales had fallen,

as I told you, from his eyes? It was through her—his little angel messenger; because she, leading him, had brought him, notwithstanding his rebellion, into a purer atmosphere: which had dissolved those scales, and had restored—I might say, given; for I doubt if he ever had it before—his sight.

“Gabrielle, can you guess who that man is—and who is his little messenger?”

“Dearest, dearest James—I always hoped, I always believed, that your mistakes would give way at last. And oh, if what you say about me, is true—if any of it is true—how can I ever be thankful enough? how can I prove my gratitude? Life is too short.”

“Yes, indeed.—But not Eternity, my child.”

“No—not Eternity.” Then she paused; and presently James caught a little sigh.

“What is it?” he said, bending lower.

"Oh, James—the old dread that comes so often! We must part, some time: you and I. One of us must one day die—and the other be left."

"Perhaps not for long, my own. God is so merciful."

"Yes, that is my comfort. He may let us grow old together, and die together, or with only a few days between, like that 'James and Cicely his wife,' in the east window. Whenever I see that window, I pray it."

"And in Heaven," said James, half dreamily—"it is my firm belief—we shall be one, my Gabrielle and I, for ever."

"To go on rising, higher and higher, for ever. Oh, when I think of that, James, I feel myself strong for pain, for death, for anything—however terrible—which might come before."

"Besides, we may be certain that whatever comes will turn to good at last."

"Yes," said Gabrielle, softly. And in her heart, she added :

"We know that ALL things work together for good to them that love God!"

THE END.

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"'David Elginbrod' is a novel which is the work of a man of true genius, and displays an original vein of reflection. There is much in his book besides a plot—there is good writing, there is good thought, and there is a strong religious feeling which will attract the highest class of readers."—*Times*.







